THE WIRE 466 | DECEMBER 2022

WIRE

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WEYES BLOOD
HAMID DRAKE

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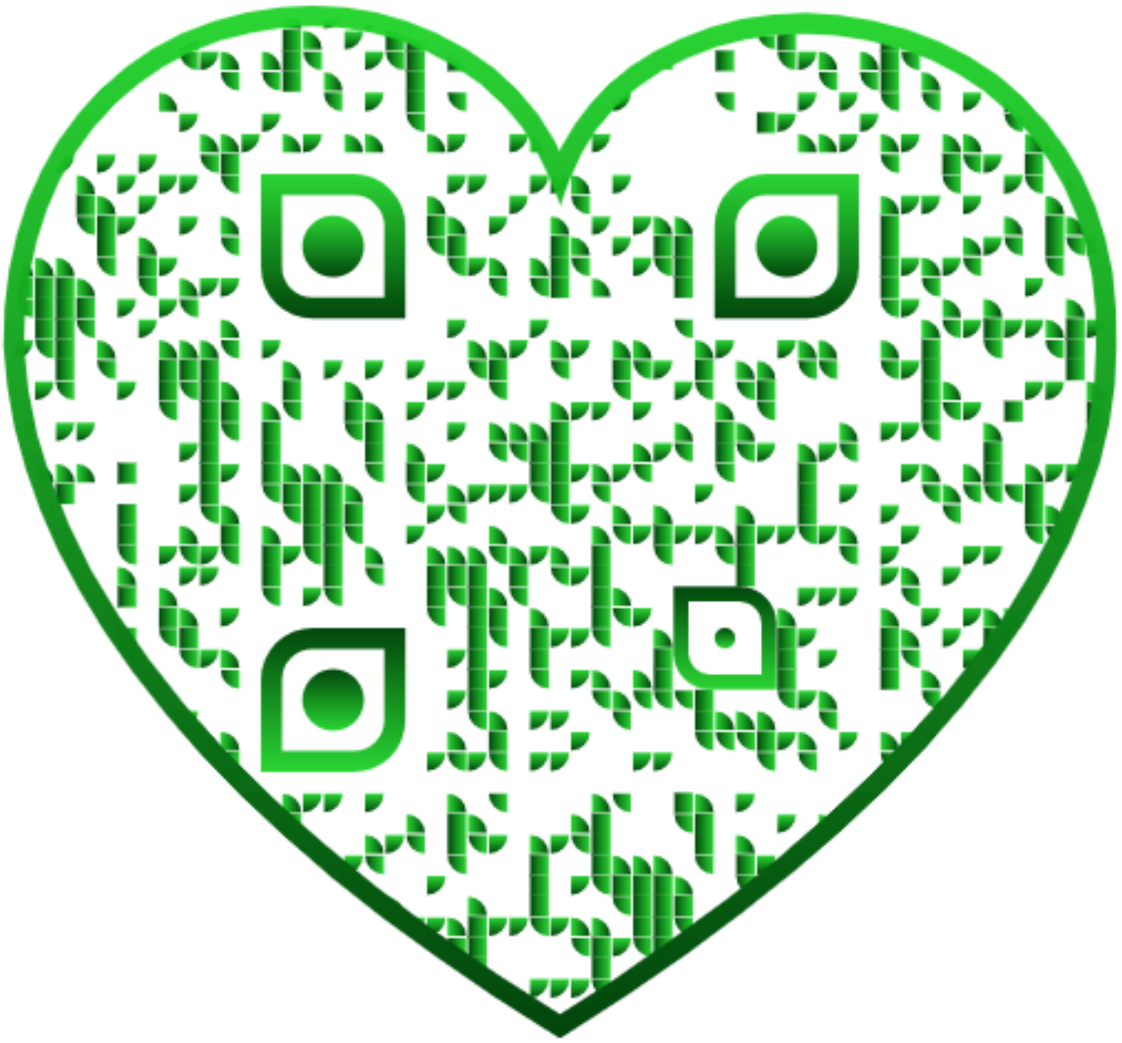
Kranky | Charles Stepney
Melvin Gibbs | Sonny Rollins
Festivals galore

Richard Pinhas

+ A user's guide to French underground rock

Richard Pinhas | French underground rock | Weyes Blood | Hamid Drake



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Rachel Bonch-Bruevich, Stella Vander, Tanto Pressanto,
The Unthanks, Yuko Kono.**

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a colourful storm

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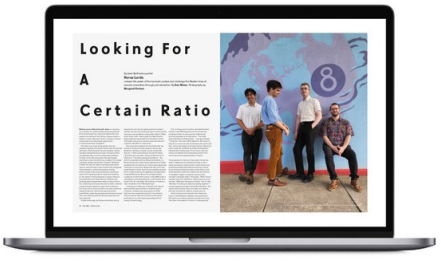

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THE RUBY CORD
by RICHARD DAWSON
of NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Out Now

The Masthead

I finally ditched the UK weekly music press in the 1990s when I got sick of its Anglo-American parochialism. Romo had followed Britpop had followed the new wave of new wave had followed grunge, and it seemed you had to be either for or against these successive waves of hype. Other scenes or areas, especially those that spoke different languages, were passively sidelined, or sometimes actively derided.

Publications like *Melody Maker* and *NME* had made important connections with European underground activity in the post-punk era, but the core mythology that they often fell back on later was a roll-call of the great groups in alternative rock and punk, without much room for stories of slow-burning scenes, collaborations or exchanges. Discovering magazines like *The Wire*, *Unknown Public* and *Halana*, alongside online platforms like the Drone On mailing list, was my first window on the many music worlds coexisting elsewhere.

So a couple of recent trips to Slovenia and the Czech Republic felt like crucial cultural exchanges after a couple of barren isolation years. There's an added urgency in listening to music from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, with Russia's war in Ukraine underlining the need for solidarity and collaboration across the continent – and even before the invasion, the Eastbloc Sound Alliance Twitter account has provided a rallying point for creative minds outside Western Europe.

A panel discussion at the Lunchmeat Festival in Prague, featuring *The Wire*'s Editor-in-Chief Chris Bohn plus writer/listeners Jaša Bužinel (from Slovenia) and Łukasz Warna-Wiesławski (from Poland) gave a chance to figure out where we are at now in representation of music from outside Anglo-American/Western European circles. If there's one thing that could be agreed on, it's that this music needs to be listened to, but beyond that, the devil is in the details. Chris, who has consistently repped for unheard music across a lifetime of listening, declared that the problem has never been writers' and publications' interest in music from elsewhere. But as his fellow panellists argued, there are channels of communication that music media respond to – PR agencies, record labels, booking agents – that can easily start to form a closed network or an echo chamber.

As any *Wire* staff member can tell you, the way we choose what we cover in the magazine is never a straightforward commercial decision or a gauge of artistic merit. It's some kind of combination of what fires our collective imagination, what questions it raises or connections it makes, and whether it feels like it has something fresh and original to say.

For my part, the way I fight against systematic bias is by trying to get rid of my system entirely. I try and derail my listening preferences, prejudices and patterns by grabbing albums that would be at the bottom of my queue first, taking the names off digital files, or using pot luck to choose areas or countries that I try to pay attention to. So far so Cage. But bias for or against this or that area of music can't easily be disrupted. It creeps back in slowly, like falling back into old domestic habits.

After swapping ideas and perspectives with heads in Slovenia and the Czech Republic, my best response is to turn down the volume of the music that I know, so that it doesn't drown out what I don't. I've turned off or toned down information feeds that usually vie for my attention. Notifications have been changed, mailing lists stopped, influencers muted. I am following new leads in unfamiliar places to see where they might lead, while watching out for what the mailbox brings.
Derek Walmsley

Distribution

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Europe
state51
Tel +44 (0)20 7729 4343
shaun@state51.com

USA
Forced Exposure
Fax 781 321 0321
AVisser@forcedexposure.com

Rest of World
Contact *The Wire* direct
Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5022
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011
distribution@thewire.co.uk

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The Wire
William Pitt Room, New Wing, Somerset House, London WC2R 1LA, UK
Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5010
fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011
thewire.co.uk
@thewiremagazine
Subscriptions subs@thewire.co.uk
Events listings listings@thewire.co.uk

Publisher Tony Herrington tony@thewire.co.uk
Editor-in-Chief Chris Bohn chris@thewire.co.uk

Editor Derek Walmsley derek@thewire.co.uk
Deputy Editors
Emily Bick emily@thewire.co.uk
Joseph Stannard joe@thewire.co.uk

Advertising & Licensing Manager
Shane Woolman shane@thewire.co.uk
Advertising Sales
James Gormley james@thewire.co.uk

Online Editor
Meg Woof meg@thewire.co.uk

Listings & Newsletter Editor
Phil England phil@thewire.co.uk

Subscriptions & online shop
Misha Farrant subs@thewire.co.uk

Art Direction
Guillaume Chuard guillaume@thewire.co.uk
Design
Gareth Lindsay gareth@thewire.co.uk
Sean Charlton White
Photo Editor
Amy Gwatkin amy@thewire.co.uk

Subscriptions & Systems Consultant
Ben House ben@thewire.co.uk
Online Development
Dorian Fraser Moore dorian@thewire.co.uk

Archivist Edwin Pouncey edwin@thewire.co.uk

Contributing Editors
Anne Hilde Neset, Rob Young

Words
Yewande Adeniran, Vanessa Ague, Jennifer Lucy Allan, Steve Barker, Mike Barnes, Dan Barrow, Robert Barry, Tristan Bath, Clive Bell, Claire Biddles, Abi Bliss, Gabriel Bristow, Britt Brown, Madeleine Byrne, Helena Celle, Philip Clark, Byron Coley, Lara C Cory, Julian Cowley, Raymond Cummings, Laina Dawes, Josh Feola, Phil Freeman, Noel Gardner, Michael A Gonzales, Francis Gooding, Kurt Gottschalk, Louise Gray, George Grella, James Hadfield, Andy Hamilton, Adam Harper, Jim Haynes, Ken Hollings, Miloš Hroch, Jo Hutton, Leah Kardos, Kek-W, Joshua Minsoo Kim, Biba Kopf, Matt Krefting, Steph Kretowicz, Neil Kulkarni, Chloe Lula, Dave Mandl, Howard Mandel, Peter Margasak, Marc Masters, Ryan Meehan, Noel Meek, Bill Meyer, Frances Morgan, John Morrison, Brian Morton, Joe Muggs, Deborah Nash, Daniel Neofetou, Louis Pattison, Hannah Pezzack, Stephanie Phillips, Antonio Poscic, Emily Pothast, Edwin Pouncey, Chal Ravens, Mosi Reeves, Tony Rettman, Simon Reynolds, Mariam Rezaei, Ilia Rogatchevski, Bruce Russell, Sukhdev Sandhu, Claire Sawers, Dave Segal, Stewart Smith, Rosie Esther Solomon, Daniel Spicer, Richard Stacey, Richard Thomas, Dave Tompkins, Spenser Tomson, David Toop, Rob Turner, Zakia Uddin, Gabriel Jermaine Vanlandingham-Dunn, Val Wilmer

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Torbjörn Zetterberg
Opinions

Swedish bassist/composer's
first solo outing
Minimal electronic
Maximal prog
Experimental songform
Unlike anything

Photo by Knotan

CORBETT vs. DEMPSEY

Letters

Influential playlist

I write in response to Lucrecia Dalt's playlist of her influences on your website [thewire.co.uk]. In the era of Spotify, playlists are ten a penny, but this one was special.

To these ears, and despite the fact that the tracks came from many far flung places, almost all of them sounded oddly familiar due to being based on archetypal or generic songforms, but crucially all were then made far less ordinary by virtue of some brilliant interpretive singers and players, and some very original arrangements. I guess this is the aspect of them that appealed to Lucrecia Dalt.

The sequencing was fantastic too. You barely notice you are moving from Cuba to Japan (the group and the country) to Jamaica and beyond.

The playlist made me go back and reread your recent interview with Dalt with a fresh perspective [*The Wire* 464], and yes, purchase a copy of her *iAy!* album.

Nathan West via email

Missy in action

Every time I peel that faux plastic off my latest copy of *The Wire*, it's a thing! My Koya Sencha gets that 70 celsius treatment and I'm off scuba diving! But, if I happen to spot my name somewhere, well, that calls for a local parade! My family knows the deal!

So, first of all, I wanted to say thank you for the beautiful review of *Noise In The Key Of Life*, found in the last issue [The Columns, *The Wire* 465]. I also wanted to correct some information included in the text. I did not perform with Missy Elliot and MIA as the review states. I was on the same bill (in both cases), but we rocked our own sets with Stereotyp and Al Haca. But I definitiely savour the thought of a parallel universe where I was there, next to Missy, holding my own with those sick dance routines! And my outfit…?!!

Lukasz Polowczyk via email

Balkan accords

As the author of the feature in *The Wire* 463 on Lenhart Tapes, I read the letter from Ben Taylor regarding NATO's role in the Kosovo war with interest [*The Wire* 464]. He is right that the geopolitical complexities of the conflict are a complicated issue. As a music journalist trying to lay out the ideas and background of Lenhart Tapes, my perspective is that it would be problematic, for instance, if the article was about the Kosovo war and I was silent about the Serbian war crimes and atrocities. But it was about a tape alchemist mixing obscure found material with Balkan folk songs and creating wonderfully riotous music.

The article aimed to sketch the atmosphere of fear in which Vladimir Lenhart (who belongs to the Slovakian minority in Serbia) started the noise-music project Pamba with his brother. They were trapped by the NATO bombarding in the village of Kovačica in the multi-ethnic province of Vojvodina. Lenhart could hear air strikes at his doorstep and feared for his and his family's life. I didn't mean to question the necessity of the operation and intervention by the formulation "destructive 'peace operation'". Instead, I wanted to ensure the formulation captures the perspective of those caught up in the conflict. The trauma is still present there. As Lenhart mentioned, one club owner in Sarajevo said Lenhart's music reminds him of "the sounds of war".

NATO's operation remains an issue with no easy or one-sided answers in the Central Eastern European region. For instance, former Czech president Václav Havel was widely criticised for supporting the operation when the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999. Critics even invented the mocking term "humanitarian bombing", which, according to some authors, "introduced a new geometry of terror". On the other hand, Serbs evidently didn't forgive NATO, and part of the population is now supporting Russia in the war and thuggery with Ukraine.

There may seem irony in my formulation "destructive 'peace operation'", but it was not intended. Instead, I attempted to show that ambivalence.

Miloš Hroch via email

Heavy duty

Belatedly, I wanted to note the death of Stephen Alex Broughton, drummer of The Edgar Broughton Band, who have been mentioned in your pages over the years, who died on 29 May. He founded the group with his brother Robert Edgar and school friend Arthur Grant in 1968. In fact, the three had been playing together since the mid-1960s as The Original Roadrunners, a quartet also featuring Victor Unitt, later of Pretty Things, on guitar.

After moving to London in October 1968 – and forging an alliance with Blackhill Enterprises, the management agency that had helped launch Syd Barrett's Pink Floyd – the trio produced some 15 albums and played across Britain and Europe (especially Germany and Norway). Advocates of free gigs, they were known for their strong leftist politics. Although they were one of the first heavy rock bands, they were also capable of sophisticated and more elaborate compositions, as in their 1971 album *Edgar Broughton Band* with orchestra arranged by friend David Bedford.

For me, the group represented a happy bridge experience between the British psychedelic subculture of the mid-1960s and the harder sounds that emerged later. Anticipating hard rock, the band took on the tradition that ran from early rock 'n' roll through mod music filtered by the psychedelia of The Jimi Hendrix Experience. John Lydon himself acknowledged Edgar Broughton Band's importance in his musical formation, and some British journalists have described the band's music, with guitars filtered by fuzz boxes and a widespread use use of distortion, as proto-punk.

Steve Broughton, who also collaborated on Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells*, played with the band until it disbanded in 2006. With a very powerful and precise style, he was instrumental in defining its sound, embodying its wild and anarchic identity.

Luca Chino Ferrari via email

Cut the crap

With regard to Daniel Spicer's review of Brian Auger, Julie Driscoll & The Trinity's *For Horizons* in *The Wire* 465: the very last sentence – was that really necessary?

Arild via email

Corrections

Issue 465 In Soundcheck, the Wayne Shorter/Terri Lyne Carrington/Esperanza Spalding/Leo Genovese album *Live At The Detroit Jazz Festival* is released by Candid. In the Avola review, the correct name of the electronic duo is Elrond. In On Location, the Wet Tuna bassist was Jim Bliss, and Erika Elder played synth.

We welcome letters commenting on all aspects of *The Wire* and the music it covers. Write to us at letters@thewire.co.uk. Letters may be edited.

Coming next month, free subscriber download: ***Below The Radar 41***

To coincide with the publication of next month's 2022 Rewind issue of *The Wire*, all the magazine's subscribers, both print and digital, will be able to download the next album in its ongoing series of underground music compilations, *Below The Radar.*

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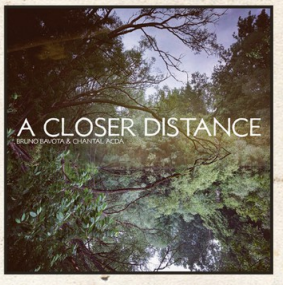

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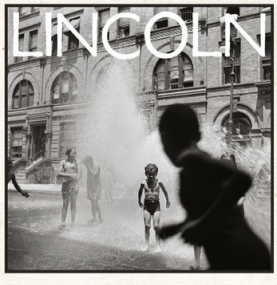

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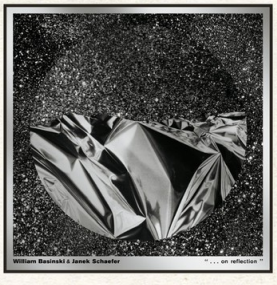

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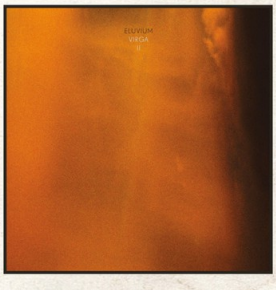

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Philanthropic music project **Dadaist Tapes** brings together new networks of players and listeners as a way of fighting isolation. By **Jennifer Lucy Allan**

Jef Mertens, *The Only Music I Ever Recorded* (2020); Tashi Dorji, *Go Then, Fearless One!* (2021); Hal Lambert, *Untitled* (2022)

"Free tapes!" The Dadaist Tapes sales pitch could start a riot of *Wire* readers. But in editions of just 25 – and with a roster including Tashi Dorji, Leila Bordreuil with Zac Rowden, Don Dietrich and Bill Nace – you'll have to be fast to get your hands on one. The project was started by Belgian film maker and musician Jef Mertens, and it does exactly as advertised, giving away free tapes of each release, with digital versions on Bandcamp (often priced as pay what you want).

Mertens started the project in February 2020, when he began a new job and could ride a bike to work, for which he received a cycling allowance through his employer. "I wanted to do something for other people with the money instead of enriching myself, so the idea of a free tape label sprung to mind," he explains over email. "A couple of weeks later lockdown began – the rest is history."

Mertens has worked as a documentary film maker for 20 years – he has filmed Sonic Youth, Borbetomagus and Loren Connors, among others, including the Borbetomagus feature *A Pollock Of Sound*. In the 2010s he started an organisation called Taping Policies, a nonprofit through which he released tapes and put shows on in his free time around working at Nike in their mail order section. Taping Policies released tapes by Bill Orcutt, Ignatz, Anne Waldman and others, releasing a couple of recordings a year. "Releasing tapes with Taping Policies was always about numbers, selling tapes, overstock, etc," Mertens says. "With Dadaist Tapes I didn't want to have anything to do with that. Tapes had to be free and needed to go fast.

"At the same time I also wanted to start a discussion about the project," continues Mertens. "Why on earth would someone distribute tapes for free? I was never sure what people's reactions were going to be. Maybe they would consider it vain. Also, with tapes going out the door super fast [I was interested in] who would get a copy; in what timezone I should publish the releases – I do think towards the last tapes, some people had given up on trying to obtain a physical copy."

One lasting effect of the project has been felt by Mertens himself. The tape that opened the project was of his own music, recorded 20 years ago at art school. The title was literal: *The Only Music I Ever Recorded*. "[It] was exactly that at that moment," he says, "my only recording. Throwing that tape out there after so long was a joke, at the same time it was not. The reactions were good, so I kept it alive."

That tape built his confidence as a musician, and he's since released a steady flow of albums, both solo and as Many Chants A Trapped Secret, with more in the pipeline. He's also releasing an album with Nickolas Mohanna on Kraak in 2023, and is working with other incumbents of the Dadaist roster, such as Belgian electronic musician Glen Steenkiste, Argentinian tape mangling duo Bardo Todol and Florida based Belgian guitarist Jonas Van den Bossche, as well as a new solo tape called *Solo Music For Too Much Hum*. "I think making films was compensation for being scared of making music myself," he says. "I picked up the guitar again and [have] set out to create my own style. I used my experiences [filming] artists to focus… sometimes it feels like I'm documenting them through my music."

Setting up social media for the project on Instagram and Facebook, while "not the most sexy way to get the word out", made the tapes move fast and helped reveal a much bigger network of artists and fans (and sometimes both). Add a tape by Bonnie 'Prince' Billy to the catalogue and the speed increased even further.

With pandemic lockdowns generally over across Europe, Dadaist Tapes is set to wrap up around the time of its its next tape by Floating Bodies. But Mertens is planning a new site for the project and its history, and the music from the tapes can still be heard over on their Bandcamp site. "Setting an end date felt extremely satisfying. This project was so rewarding because it showed what an idea can do. The fact it was temporary adds to that. [Dadaist Tapes] is intertwined with my new music career, so it will always have a place with me." ☐ dadaisttapes.com, dadaisttapes.bandcamp.com

Unofficial Channels
DJ M-TRAXXX

In the 1990s, American dance music was undergoing a period of rapid expansion. Underground nightlife included urban loft parties, high tech clubs and suburban teen raves, but many American DJs were finding greater success overseas. This period is frequently overlooked from a critical perspective, likely because the music needs to be experienced in the context of a DJ mix to be truly appreciated.

An extensive online library of rare recordings compiled by Manny Cuevas (aka DJ M-TRAXXX) provides the opportunity for a re-examination. Based in Orlando, Florida, he has posted over 550 mixes and counting to SoundCloud out of his collection of thousands of tapes. In the 1980s, he visited his cousin in Chicago, listening to the Hot Mix 5 crew and picking up mixes from Frankie Knuckles at the famous Importes Etc store. By the 1990s, Cuevas was hosting the *Deep Underground House Show* on WPRK, inviting DJs to guest and send mixes.

"I wanted to have the best radio show in the world," he recalls. "I'm like, God, there's got to be a way. I want to know what's going on in New York, in Europe, *everywhere*. And next thing I know, some guy called me out of the blue. He heard about me and he just started sending me tapes from New York."

Cuevas posted and responded to advertisements in magazines like *Mixmag* and *The Source*, tapping into a trading network of likeminded souls. As a result, tapes of his show made their way around the world. Cuevas began calling record labels as well. And whenever he connected an artist's booking agent with a local club owner, he asked permission to make a booth recording of the set.

Notable selections from the archive include Spencer Kincy's "Dark & Light" mix from 1993, which reveals the raw energy of Chicago's loft scene with explicit vocals and dramatic EQing. Junior Vasquez and Danny Tenaglia's "Sounds Of New York Underground" from the Sound Factory in June 1994 captures the hypnotic repetition that defined tribal house. Sets by Jeff Mills, DJ T-1000 (Alan Oldham), Blake Baxter and DJ Rush hit hard with fast, stripped down techno. Other highlights include mixes by DJ Pierre, Glenn Underground, Derrick Carter and Ron Trent.

The goal is to educate the next generation of DJs. "I can't take these tapes with me to heaven," Cuevas reasons. "I have a grandson, he's just six years old, and I just found out he wants to DJ. I'm trying to get stuff out there on the internet so when he gets older, when I leave, he can find it, just to carry the torch." ☐ soundcloud.com/djmtraxxx

Jacob Arnold

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LANTERN REC

Johnny Clarke
Can't Get Enough

Linda Di Franco
Rise Of The Heart

Minnie Riperton
Come To My Garden
(clear vinyl)

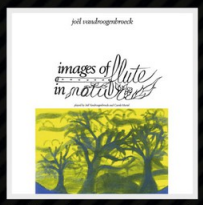
Chakachas
Chakachas

Soulgramma

Ram John Holder
Black London Blues

Devon Russell
Darken Than Blue

Affinity
Affinity
(gatefold)

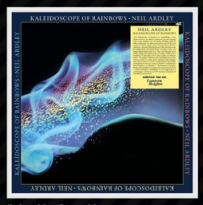


J. Vandroogenbroeck
Images Of Flute
In Nature

BONFIRE RECORDS

Bachdenkel
Lemmings
(LP + 10" gatefold)

Veronique Chalot
J'ai Vu Le Loup
(with inlay card)



Neil Ardley
Kaleidoscope
Of Rainbows

Mike Taylor
Remembered

Lantern Heights

Michael Chapman
And Then, There
Were Three
(Double LP)

Coxhill/Courbois/Van't Hof
Toverbal Sweet

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The Cyborg Manifesto

Composer **Zubin Kanga** leads a research initiative blurring the lines between new technologies and radical performance strategies. By **Emily Bick**. Photography by **Joseph Delaney**

At a recent concert at London's Cafe Oto, pianist, composer and technologist Zubin Kanga performed pieces by Nwando Ebizie, Nina Whiteman and Neil Luck, alongside one of his own works. Over the course of the evening, he duetted with machine-learning generated birds and a possibly sentient AI, and conjured wild theremin-like sounds from the piano's guts with a pair of wand-like knitting needles and MiMU motion sensing gloves, among other things. These are some of the works produced by Cyborg Soloists, an interdisciplinary UKRI-funded research hub based at Royal Holloway University, London, where Kanga is the principal investigator.

Projects involve work created with everything from MiMU gloves to EEG brain scanning devices: Kanga is working with composer Alexander Schubert, brain-computer interface scientist Serafeim Perdikis and technology partner ANT Neuro to expand upon Alvin Lucier's early experimentation with brain waves in *Music For Solo Performer* (1965). The technology has improved exponentially since then. "We found a way to be able to reliably trigger and control things based on this phenomenon," says Kanga. "That if you have, say, flashing numbers on screen. If they're flashing at different frequencies, you can detect the frequencies at the back of your head using EEG, and so you can know exactly what you're looking at. And that gets used by people with disabilities to control, say, prosthetics or to help them with other kinds of disability, things to do with reading and speech. Alex is going to use this to allow me to, with my brain, control light and sound… and then hopefully what we discover by doing this can be fed back to the company, because they've never done an arts project."

Many of the pieces created as part of Cyborg Soloists don't just integrate new technologies – they make them a visible part of the performance. "A lot of them are about the effect on the body, and also about the audience's empathetic way of looking at what's happening. In a lot of very traditional electroacoustic music, often there's someone behind the laptop and an instrumentalist, and there might be something very sophisticated happening, but it's very hard for the audience to really gauge what that is – it's hidden. It's all about the end result and not about the process," he explains. "A lot of these devices are about bringing the audience into the process – about making the process of controlling the electronics quite theatrical."

A 2018 collaboration with Schubert, *WIKI-PIANO.NET*, was a radical opening up of process: the piece is an online score hosted on a Wikipedia style website that anyone can edit. No musical expertise is necessary to participate. "The content on the website changes all the time and every performance then becomes different, learning to interpret what's there, and there's all sorts of interesting things that happen. People start interacting with each other, playing these little games, little jokes with each other, people put on musical content on there that I'd react with… trying to make sense of what's there, and turn it into an actual piece of music."

Since his student days at the University of Sydney, and later at London's Royal Academy of Music, Kanga has always been fascinated by the theatrical possibilities of performance, "Integrating theatre into music like that goes further back than all this new technology," he says, referencing his early mentor Rolf Hind. "I played a piece of his called *The Towers Of Silence*, which starts on the pedals and then comes up and goes on to prepared piano, and you're using your body in different ways in different movements. And there was a piece I did by Claudia Molitor called *Tango*, where you kind of do yoga on and around the piano."

Many composers involved in the Cyborg Soloists project incorporate elements of theatre, cabaret, film and internet memes and aesthetics into their work. "I always had an interest in the other arts," says Kanga. "It made sense for me because I'm so interested in film and theatre and these other arts as well as music that I could then be able to explore further. There's a lot of tradition there. It comes back to this 1970s moment with Mauricio Kagel and Karlheinz Stockhausen, but a lot of this has also been about observing what's been happening and other performers working, and being inspired by people like Neil Luck, what he was doing even when he was a student. He was always doing things which were just him and a microphone and a boombox, which are very theatrical, with the table falling apart and then him coming back to continue his monologue."

Sometimes these collisions of performer and technology can be surprisingly moving: see *Answer Machine Tape, 1987*, a new collaboration between Kanga and composer Philip Venables, UK premiered at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in November. It's based around the answering machine messages left for artist David Wojnarowicz, while his former lover, artist Peter Hujar, was in hospital dying from AIDS. "Both of us are people who are old enough to have remembered the AIDS crisis, but not really old enough to have experienced it first-hand the way someone like David Wojnarowicz was doing, because we were both small kids at the time. And when we got this text element from the device, that then allows me to comment on the tape, to transcribe it to the tape, to give contextual information, like, say who's calling, say what date it is and what time."

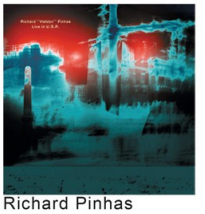
The technology affords a dimension of reverence. Venables's and Kanga's staging also gives the story of Wojnarowicz, who famously depicted himself with his lips sewn shut to protest against the silence around AIDS in the 80s, a new voice. "As it goes on, I can also give a certain internal monologue of what's happening," Kanga says. "And of course, what I'm playing on the piano is often character studies of who's calling as well as conveying this emotion of what's happening through this week of David's life."

☐ Zubin Kanga performs Philip Venables's *Answer Machine Tape 1987* at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival on 19 November. cyborgsoloists.com

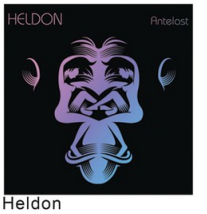
The new French underground on Bam Balam Records

Richard Pinhas

Pinhas - Merzbow
BBCD094



Richard Pinhas
BBRP092



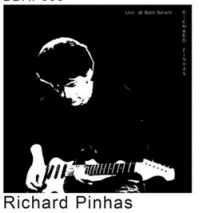
Heldon
BBRP090

Heldon
BBRP082

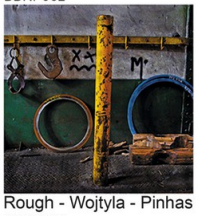
Richard & Duncan Pinhas
BBRP081

Richard Pinhas
BBRP077

Pinhas - Merzbow
BBRP070



Richard Pinhas
BBRP062



Rough - Wojtyla - Pinhas
BBRP057

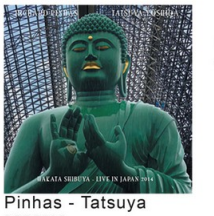
Heldon
BBRP055

Kawabata / Pinhas / Tatsuya
BBRP052

Pinhas / Heldon / Schizo / THX
BBRP050

Pinhas / Tatsuya / Ono
BBRP040

Richard Pinhas
BBRP036

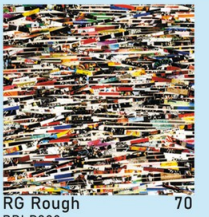


Pinhas - Tatsuya
BBRP035

Pinhas

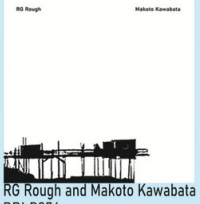
RG Rough: Electronic, Experimental, Psychedelic.

Besides solo albums on Bam Balam records and Bandcamp,
RG Rough has collaborated with Richard Pinhas,
Makoto Kawabata (Acid Mothers Temple)
and with the late New York poet Steve Dalachinsky.

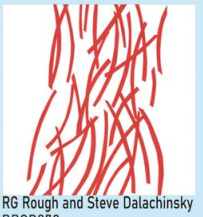


RG Rough 70
BBLP089

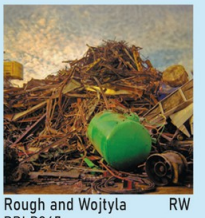
RG Rough 60
BBLP065



RG Rough and Makoto Kawabata
BBLP074



RG Rough and Steve Dalachinsky
BBCD078



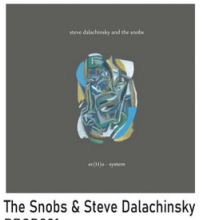
Rough and Wojtyla RW
BBLP047

RG Rough & Léa Claessens
BBCDR093

RG Rough Family Affair
BBCDR076

Laurent Perrier & David Fenech
BBLP069

D. Grimaud & V. Vilhet "AAHH!!"
BBLP028



The Snobs & Steve Dalachinsky
BBCD031

Michel Henritzi & Rinji Fukuoka
BBLP021

Mark Enbatta's Tribe
BBLP068

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In The Zonez

Sound artist and producer **Suzi Analogue** turns her peripatetic listening into new territories you can dance to. By **Neil Kulkarni.** Photography by **Alex Williams**

"When streaming took over, I was a little disappointed," admits Miami based multidisciplinary sound artist Suzi Analogue. "I came up in the cassette tape era and I have always loved physical music. For *Infinite Zonez* I wanted a physical iteration of my *Zonez 1–4* series of mixtapes, so I sifted through 44 tracks and with the help of Matthew from Disciples we found the ones that would sound great on vinyl.

"Disciples are so good at drum 'n' bass sounds," continues Analogue, "we knew what would really *smack*. I was one of those people who would obsessively read liner notes, they were my education in learning about music and lyrics, so it's amazing to make something you can hold in your hand and get immersed in."

Immersed is dead right – *Infinite Zonez* takes the mixtapes Analogue collaboratively created between 2016–19, and marshals their sprawl into a tight, mind-blowing set of tracks that blew this reviewer's head off on first exposure (see *The Wire* 465).

I ask her how it felt reconnecting with her own pre-pandemic music. "It felt visceral. The *Zonez* series was about all of my experiences to date, each volume was a different phase of my exploration at that time, whether I was in New York or Miami or on the road. The first one came out in 2016, which seems a lifetime away – so much has happened since then that I felt I needed to encapsulate this *now*. I still feel we haven't returned to the sense of freedom we had before the pandemic – there was a sense of exploration, experimentation, connection and unity, without so much worry on your mind as we have now."

Analogue – the name is a nod to RZA's Bobby Digital persona – grew up in Baltimore and has since moved between New York, Virginia and Miami, touring and working across the US, Africa and Europe, and creating her own unique blend of Black experimental dance music that always has a palpable sense of movement. It's not just in the way her sounds insist on your body breaking forth in rapt communion, but also the panoply of sounds she blends: Baltimore crunk, Miami bass, southern hiphop, UK drill and drum 'n' bass, Detroit techno. If not quite restless, this music seems to have sucked in everything Analogue encounters, from her extensive travels to walks down her local streets.

"That's really what the concept of *Zonez* is trying to capture – in all of these places I've lived and worked it's the people and the experiences I've encountered that end up working their way into the music. But it's not strictly geographical – it's almost a quantum concept – time, space, experience, energy, the technological set-up – it all creates this zone, everything that's happening at that moment, creates this zone, and that zone is a feeling that includes the people, the location, the air, the sounds around me. In New York I make busy chaotic, intense music. In Miami I smoothed it all out. The clubs are important too – because I like listening the whole time, deep listening, even in that club environment."

Analogue's music first gained an ear outside of the US and the rigidity of the music business's schematics around sound – especially for young Black queer female producers in experimental music – led to Analogue setting up her own Never Normal imprint. "It's an anomaly," she nods. "This is the country that created hiphop, created jazz but it's like – well, we'll create the genres but once they're commercially viable there is no wriggle room to be experimental and supported by the industry. That lack of cultural support is because all our musical efforts are pushed to be commercial and to be privatised. Visual arts are supported, funded – musical artwork isn't taken as seriously. I started Never Normal to fight that, and if anything that fight is becoming more and more important because the business is getting even more risk-averse and commercial.

"Once I'd done a few releases where I'd created it all, including the visual side of it with artwork, I realised I was basically project managing and thought why project-manage for others, why not do it for myself? And that was the birth of Never Normal."

These days, she reveals, "I've been immersed in birdsong and classical music. I can't just sit and make a song – I have to ask where does this go, what does it look like, what does the world this music creates look like? That's so important for me because I do majorly experience life through sound. Before work, I sit in silence, actually carve out space in my mind, for silence and softer sound, just to pad my mental reality. It refreshes my ears in my mind, so that when I do sit down, I have a very clear-headed way of approaching my music. I'm at the point now where things are coming together in new ideas again." □

Suzi Analogue's *Infinite Zonez* is released by Disciples

Marc Richter
Diode, Triode LP

Recordings made at INA GRM and ZKM by Black To Comm's Marc Richter.

Vindicatrix
One or Several Tigers
CD + Art Book
Music for Singapore artist Ho Tzu Nyen's video installation.

Ho Tzu Nyen at
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October 19, 2022 - January 08, 2023

Marc Richter
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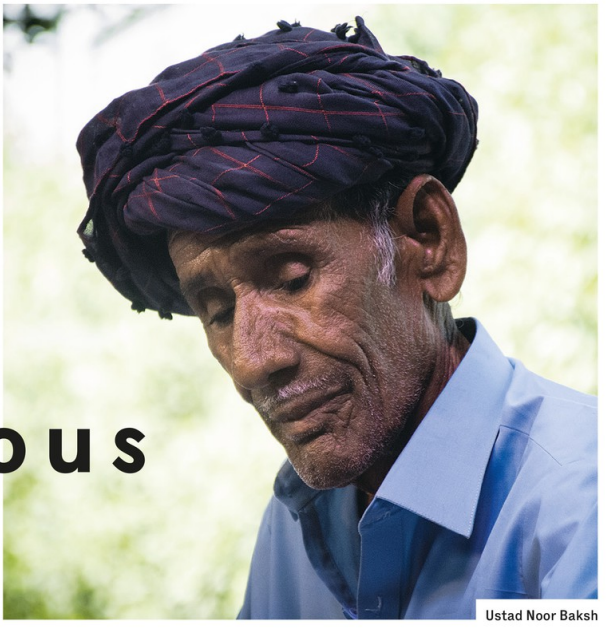
Francesco Bolognini - Márton Csókás
Ivan Chiossone (Zëro)
Eric Aldéa (Zëro)

Ici d'ailleurs
KARTEL

Pakistani ethnomusicologist **Daniyal Ahmed** recounts his quest to Balochistan to find the elusive benju player **Ustad Noor Bakhsh**. By **Francis Gooding**. Photography by **Hira Abro**

Serendipitous Journey



Ustad Noor Baksh

Coincidence is the rule in life, not the exception. In early 2022, Daniyal Ahmed, a musician and ethnomusicologist from Karachi, travelled nearly 1000 kilometres from his home city to the remote reaches of Pakistan's Makran coast. He was looking for an elderly musician he had first learned about some years before through a brief film shot on a mobile phone. The man's name was Ustad Noor Bakhsh, and in the clip he was playing an unusual instrument. Something like a crudely electrified zither operated by typewriter-like buttons, it's known locally as a benju. Adopted and then adapted by Pakistani folk musicians sometime during the 20th century, the benju descends from the taishōkoto, invented by a Japanese instrument maker named Gorō Morita in the early 20th century, and which was sometimes considered a children's toy (it is also used in East African taarab, and in India it became known as the bulbul tarang; it was also said to have been used by Neu! on their first album). It is now locally manufactured, and as the honorific Ustad suggests, Noor Bakhsh is acknowledged as a master of the instrument.

Ahmed knew only that Bakhsh lived somewhere near the city of Pasni, on the Indian Ocean coast of Pakistan's poorest province Balochistan. As the pandemic abated, he convinced a friend to go with him, and they set off with little more than a tip-off to rely on. Bakhsh had no phone, let alone any social media accounts, and calls and messages to contacts in the area turned up nothing, not even an address. "I could hear that this was something," Ahmed says of Bakhsh's music. "So really, I just went there, because that sound just drove me. There are no hotels between Karachi and Pasni and we thought we might have to camp, so we took our tents and a small stove – the coast is very sparsely populated, it's just highway and cliffs and mountains."

After two days driving, asking after Bakhsh in small towns, Ahmed finally found a lead through one of Bakhsh's former students, who explained that the musician lived in a village that was not even connected to the road system. You simply had to know where to turn off the highway into unmarked mountainous desert and keep driving. When finding it seemed impossible, they stopped at a small roadside teahouse.

"This is where serendipity hits," says Ahmed, laughing as he recalled the events that followed. "We went in asking, 'Do you know this guy Ustad Noor Bakhsh, do you know where his village is?' And the guy said, 'Ustad Noor Bakhsh? The benju player? There he is!' And he was literally just there, on the other side of the road, squatting by the highway waiting for a lift back to his village, because he was with his son-in-law and the chain had come off his motorbike."

Though Bakhsh was understandably surprised that people had come all the way from Karachi to find him, he was unflappable. "We said, 'We're here to meet you, we came looking for you, and we want to listen to your music' and he was like 'OK, sure, let's go'. So then we put him in the car with us. He showed us where to get off the highway, and when we got there he takes out his benju, plugs his amp in… and he just played and obviously, I was like, this is why I came here. It was everything and much more."

As Pakistan's western-most province, Balochistan is bounded by Iran to the west and Afghanistan to the north, and the Balochi people and language are spread across the three countries. With the melting pot of the Indian Ocean to the south, the area's geography has made it a historic crossroads of culture, language and trade. With these things come the music of their bearers, and as a master folk musician, Bakhsh has absorbed a huge repertoire from all points. As an ethnomusicologist, Ahmed realised he was in the presence of a rare talent. "I knew that he was playing Balochi music, so I was vaguely familiar with the forms. But he's also playing folk renditions of Hindustani raga, Farsi tunes, Kurdish tunes and tunes of all the different languages of Pakistan, like Pashto and Punjabi tunes, and renditions of Bollywood tunes. And then original compositions rooted in Balochi music. He even played me an Israeli tune, and there was an Arabic tune, a tune based in Iranian music from Saravan…"

Bakhsh is not sure how old he is; his passport suggests he is well into his eighties, though he denies it is accurate. And despite seeming newly discovered, he was far from being musically isolated or unknown. Indeed, he had a varied and well-travelled career in his younger days, accompanying many famous singers, and he still enjoys the status of local legend. But until the arrival of Ahmed his fame had long been confined to the Pasni area. This was soon to change.

Ahmed stayed with Bakhsh for several days, recording him outdoors with his most trusted accompanists, on a basic two-mic set-up. They started to post clips and stories online, and the reaction was instant, clocking up thousands of views in a matter of days. "His music just speaks to people," says Ahmed. Back in Karachi, Ahmed was introduced to Nizar Lalani, one of Pakistan's most storied music producers; so taken was Lalani with Bakhsh's music and story that he agreed to master the recording for free.

Things rapidly snowballed: one of Bakhsh's renderings of a Bollywood hit went viral in India, leading to wide coverage in the Indian press. Ahmed suddenly found himself in the position of mediator between a wider world hungry for more of Bakhsh's music, and an elderly musician living off-grid in a village without electricity or sanitation. "The sense of responsibility – it's been a lot", Ahmed reflects. "I have to do justice to these recordings." An album, *Jingul*, was released in September; a European tour is planned. Bakhsh, of course, remains sanguine. ☐

Ustad Noor Bakhsh's *Jingul* is released by Honiunhoni

Oxbow & Peter Brötzmann *join forces on this live double album*

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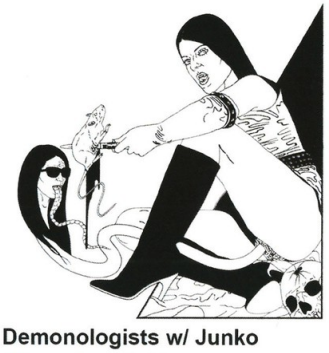
Patrick Shiroishi *"Inoue" - 60 track collection of saxophone and percussion explorations*

Steve Moore & Overcalc *- collaboration between Zombi and Multicult members*

SLEEPING GIANT GLOSSOLALIA



Demonologists w/ Junko
"Nure-Onna" CD

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New Geographies

Navigating noises drawn from ceramics, guitar and electronics, Peruvian musician **Ale Hop** discovers new landscapes of sound. By **Hannah Pezzack**. Photography by **Isabel O'Toole**

There's a musty smell emanating through the pews of the Singlekerk, a 15th century church located in the heart of Amsterdam. Reminiscent of the entirely pleasant scent of aged books, it adds a multisensory component to Ale Hop aka Alejandra Cárdenas Pacheco's performance with her collaborator Tatiana Heuman. On stage, the duo manipulate a series of instruments – ceramic tubes, bowls and flutes – inspired by South American traditional and ancient artefacts. Pouring water into clay vessels, shaking and spilling the contents, the two women record and loop the sloshing sounds into a rhythmic, wet beat. Pacheco's voice – in both English and Spanish – rings out: *"Air that whispers about the past… What is on the other side?"*

"We made the ceramics ourselves," says Pacheco. "Although the first three whistling bottles didn't work out at all. It took a lot of reading, watching YouTube videos and looking at photos sourced from museums. We were interested in working with the technologies of clay, as well as the fact that the object itself came with a history. There are quite some stories about what the artefacts would have been used for. There are whistles, for instance, in the shape of frogs or birds and their timbre seems to replicate the sound of these creatures.

"Another theory – and this one is more supported – is that the whistling bottles were used in rituals," she continues. "It's been proposed that the bottles are tuned around the same frequency, and when played simultaneously they interact in the harmonic spectrum creating psychoacoustic effects."

The show, titled Near And Remote Memory Activation Practices, is part of Sonic Acts Biennial 2022. As with all of Pacheco's endeavours, this performance is grounded in extensively researched conceptual underpinnings, informed by a background in academia. Having completed a master's in Sound Studies, she is currently pursuing a PhD at the Berlin University of Arts and helms the editorial platform Contingent Sounds, which aims at facilitating critical thought and artistic research on the practice of listening and relationality situated in the Global South.

Beginning her career in Lima's experimental underground, she moved permanently to Germany in 2015 where she has carved out a name for herself as an erudite and inventive electroacoustic composer. Her repertoire, alongside artworks and original music for film, dance and theatre projects, includes a handful of LPs, the latest of which is *Why Is It They Say A City Like Any City?* released by Karlrecords. Produced together with 13 other musicians, including KMRU, Felicity Mangan, Daniela Huerta and Tomas Tello, it imagines a hallucinatory journey through South American territories.

"It was my Covid baby," reveals Pacheco. "I wanted to do a collaborative project, but I didn't want to use Zoom. I hated it from the start. It's such a flat way of communicating. So during quarantine, I began writing letters from places I was thinking about, which of course I couldn't visit. I would write as if I was there, as if I was addressing someone else. Then I realised I could send off the texts to a musician and ask them to respond through sound."

Narrated through spoken word – strange, machinic passages and Ale Hop's own voice – *Why Is It They Say A City Like Any City?* is a neo-psych folk odyssey. Its slow pace and beams of Radiophonic-style white noise evoke an uncanny landscape – a psychic arrangement for chamber strings and deftly manipulated electronics.

In her past productions, most of them released by Buh, the Peruvian label run by Luis Alvarado, there's a recurrent tilt towards her homeland. Take 2019's *Apophenia*, which is named after the tendency to perceive connections and meaning in random noise, similar to how clouds can resemble animals or human faces. Its tracks are composed of recordings and samples collected from video archives. Conjuring sweeping coastlines, mountains and urban centres, *Apophenia* plunders the depths of sonic memory.

Growing up under Alberto Fujimori's dictatorship, Pacheco remembers her hometown of Lima as "a very violent place in the 1990s, but also beautiful. It's right in front of the ocean – there's an amazing view. It's a city full of contrasts. It was loud! Every day on the street you'd hear klaxons. The politics were awful, and my family was kind of awful also. So I had this feeling of wanting to implode. Early on, I was given a classical education in music, but it didn't stick. When I was 16 or 17, I began playing in the rock and punk underground scene. Then I got into pop electronica, but after a few years realised that it was not my thing. I ended up finding myself in experimental music."

If Ale Hop's studio output tends towards ambient, conceptual and cerebral works, as a solo performer on stage, the guitar is her main instrument. Manipulating its body and strings into contorted positions, she produces visceral, gut-wrenching chords which she further distorts through effects.

"At the moment, I'm working on an album focusing on the guitar – I want to capture my live sets," she says. "The guitar is so dynamic. It's very intense. When I'm performing, there's usually a backbone of material and I improvise the rest. People quite often come up to me after shows and ask where they can buy the music, but I don't have it yet to share."

Alongside finishing a PhD thesis on the synthesized voice and AI from a colonial perspective, she's looking forward to joining forces with her partner Ignacio Briceño for a film score and installation piece as well as extending her collaboration with Cajon player Laura Robles. Also on the horizon is a book on female pioneers of electronic and electroacoustic music in Latin America, scheduled to be published via Contingent Sounds.

Threaded through these projects is Pacheco's fascination with the past. Tracing how instruments carry forward the legacies of colonialism, she unearths sonic practices that have been suppressed or obscured, reshaping their tonalities into shimmering new forms. ☐ Ale Hop's *Why Is It They Say A City Like Any City?* is released by Karlrecords

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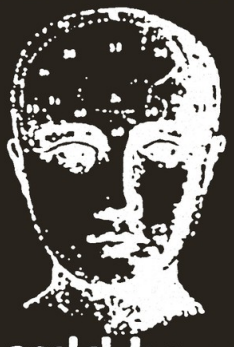

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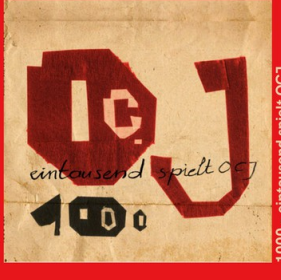

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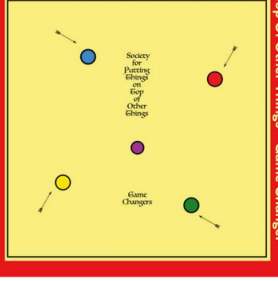

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Fan flag at DMZ Peace Train Music Festival, 2022: "Let's be healthy and filial. Starting tomorrow!"

A peace festival near the **Korean Demilitarised Zone** displays the tensions between the current political regimes on the peninsula. By **James Gui**

The first thing that greets you at Goseokjeong Pavilion is a preserved F-86 Sabre fighter jet. Here in Cheorwon, a sleepy county just kilometres from the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), scars from the Korean War have been refashioned into monuments, reminders of a decades-long conflict that continues to divide a people. But the mood is far from sombre; this weekend's keyword is peace as the DMZ Peace Train Music Festival enters its third year. The message couldn't be more urgent globally, with war in Ukraine, clashes in Palestine and an expired truce in Yemen making headlines. And locally, the new Yoon Suk-Yeol administration has taken a hawkish stance toward the North, who have also been ramping up missile tests.

But all that seems far from the minds of the thousands at the festival. Older folks here to see gauras in bloom mingle with young music lovers; at the Seoul Community Radio stage, they dance to music that runs the gamut from rockabilly to UK garage to ppong-tchak. On the main stage, Soumbalgwang's electrifying post-hardcore causes moshing millennials to wave fanmade flags as children scream and bounce under their parents' loving supervision. "Cheorwon was originally more popular with elderly folks because it was a border area after the war with North Korea," says Kim Yoong-sun, who runs a cafe beside the festival grounds. "I think it's wonderful that the younger generation is here because of the festival, it makes us all feel younger!"

The novelty of a Korean grandma dancing to a remix of M-Beat's "Incredible" certainly has its charm. Moreover, the intergenerational nature of the festival feels important: with the armistice reaching its 70th year, memories and familial ties in the North are disappearing. "My mom went through the war era, but young kids don't even think about it," says festival co-founder Cecilia Soojeong Yi. These days, the division of Korea is a tragedy most aren't confronted with, especially in the West, where discourse about North Korea rings either with mocking caricature or geopolitical detachment. Once considered temporary, the border has ossified into a given. So when jazz maverick Kim Oki tells everyone to "hug the person next to you, you don't know when they'll be gone", the words brim with significance.

"For some reason while listening to the music, it hit me," says singer and producer Majdal Nijim, aka Makimakkuk. "Maybe there are similarities with me being Palestinian and having the people separated in that way. North Korea is there, South Korea is here, and you understand that historically they're the same people, and it really feels sad."

I feel those emotions as she sings over the hybrid club music that she and her peers in Ramallah have been pioneering. Even if Palestinians and Koreans are both divided by militarised borders in their own historical lands, music has somehow brought them together here in Cheorwon.

Though there aren't any North Korean musicians performing, folk artist Lang Lee crosses the border musically in a special performance at Woljeong-ri Station. Atop train tracks turned palimpsest by bombings, Lee sings her lilting rendition of "Imjingang", a North Korean song that travelled South via Japan and was once banned during the 1970s military dictatorship. Singing first in Japanese and then in Korean, Lee's voice is suffused with history, carrying the weight of a diaspora displaced by Japanese colonialism and civil war.

What happens next is one of those strange contradictions that arises when you host a music festival near one of the most heavily militarised borders in the world. A soldier from the South Korean army takes the stage to say some words, promising to keep up the bitter fight with "enemy". "But the enemies he was talking about are just people who live on that side of the land," says Lee. "At an event called Peace Train, this soldier comes out and says we've killed many enemies and that we'll continue to fight hard. I was like, something's off."

I get the feeling that the reason this festival was allowed to happen at all is because of its supposedly apolitical stance. "We believe that peace is very important, but not in a political way," says Soojeong Yi. Even then, rebooting things this year was no easy feat. The national enthusiasm for peace and hope for reunification that spilled over from the 2018 Panmunjom Declaration has dissolved. The new conservative governor of Gangwon province, bent on ending the festival, slashed the budget by 70 per cent despite support from the county level administration. So the (perhaps strategic) ambiguity of the term peace might explain the variety of responses by artists, audience, residents and the military. But can a festival held by the DMZ really be apolitical?

The festival's location in Cheorwon embodies these contradictions. "This town is really weird," says Cecilia. "Because the DMZ is not militarised, it's surrounded by the most heavily militarised zone." The idea of such an area being a tourist destination is jarring at first. But the actual place is stunning. Untouched by the hyperspeed development that transformed the rest of the country, the DMZ and its surrounding areas are the most well-preserved ecological sites in Korea.

Maybe I'm overthinking things. The spectre of war is omnipresent, yet festivalgoers are having the time of their lives. The intoxicating buzz in the air interacts playfully with the gravity of history: in high demand are the "Peace Draft Beer", "Provisional Government Highball" and "Transcontinental Crossing Over The DMZ Cocktail", all sold by festival partners. There's an idealism here that flouts the seeming impossibility of peace. An older Korean man holds up his phone, across which scrolls the phrase "jeulgeopge salja"– "let's live happily". Back at the SCR stage, Seesea spins techno-trot fusions to a crowd of young Koreans in plastic overcoats, rain be damned. I begin to hope that the renewal of these older sounds might trickle down to an interest in healing the wounds that birthed them, and that this festival might provide an occasion for the dialogue necessary to reunify a divided people. ☐ dmzpeacetrain.com

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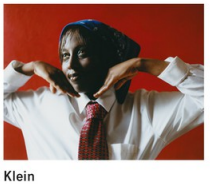

Klein

27 October
Emily Bick played music by Maggie Nicols, Ono, Richard Pinhas and more.

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6 October
Phil England played music by Yanna Momina, The Bug, Horace Andy and more.

29 September
Meg Woof played music by Klein, Ashtray Navigations, Suzi Analogue and more.

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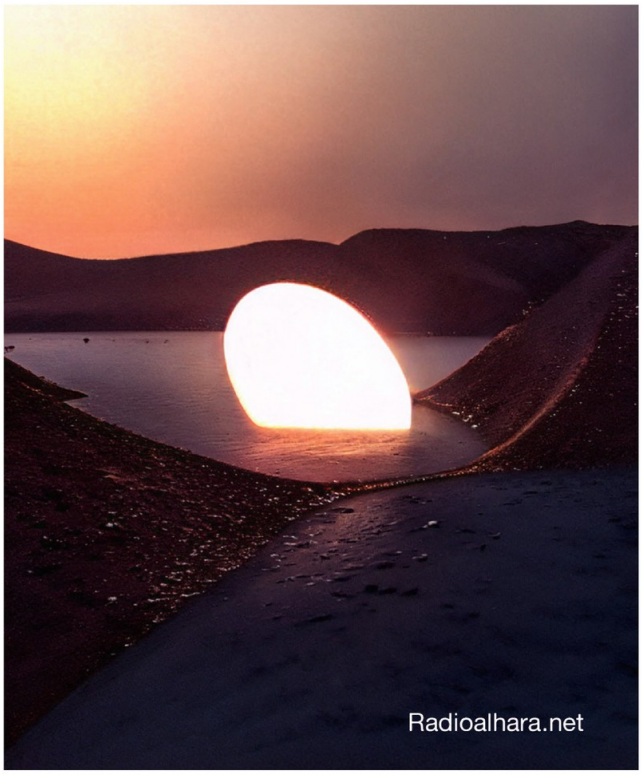

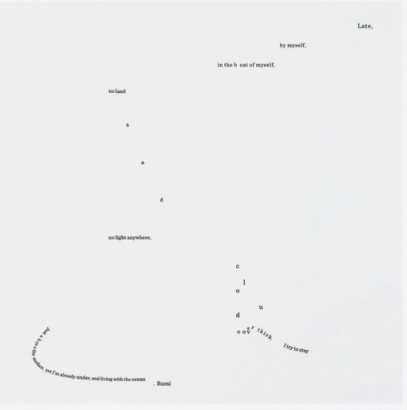

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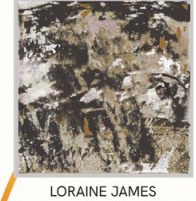

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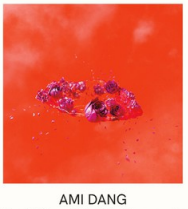

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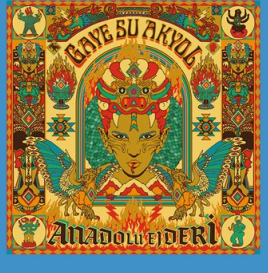

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Hamid Drake

Tested by **Bill Meyer**. Photography by **Clotilde Petrosino**

Hamid Drake was born in 1955 in Monroe, Louisiana, and moved during his infancy to Evanston, a northern suburb of Chicago, Illinois. He grew up near the home of Fred Anderson, saxophonist and a guiding figure in the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, and started playing drums in school. During the 1970s, he and childhood friend Adam Rudolph played in the proto-world music ensemble Mandingo Griot Society with Gambian kora player Foday Musa Suso. They invited trumpeter Don Cherry to guest on their first LP, and Cherry in turn invited Drake to visit him in Sweden. He brought his family, which stayed for a season in the Cherry household, and then went on the road with his host.

Throughout the 80s, Drake balanced work as a jobbing musician in Chicago with occasional European sojourns with free jazz eminences including Anderson, Pharoah Sanders, and continued the long relationship with Cherry until the latter's death in 1995. Associations with Peter Brötzmann and Bill Laswell led to further gigs in Europe and around the world, but every year since 1990, he has returned to Chicago to perform sunrise percussion concerts on the winter solstice with fellow percussionist Michael Zerang.

Drake's drumming combines stylistic versatility with a playfully challenging restlessness. It's unlikely that anyone thought about dropping roots reggae grooves behind Brötzmann before he did so. Aside from his group Bindu, which made three albums during the first decade of this century, and a recent stint helming Hamid Drake's Turiya: Honoring Alice Coltrane, he has rarely worked as a leader. But even when his name's not on the front of the record, his instincts for when to hold a groove and when to shake things up make him a virtual co-composer.

Drake has maintained enduring partnerships with Pierre Dørge, Archie Shepp, Ken Vandermark, Jemeel Moondoc, Ernest Dawkins, Kidd Jordan, Assif Tsahar, Joe McPhee, John Dikeman, Joshua Abrams, Irène Schweizer, and the free rock ensemble, Mako Sica. With William Parker, he comprises one of the most prolific and renowned rhythm sections in music today. He has also appeared on a staggering number of records, including *Seriana Promethea* (Intakt), a recent effort by David Murray's Brave New World Trio, and *Mediumistic Methodology* (Astral Spirits), a duet with All Heroes Are Gang Leaders saxophonist Devin Brahja Waldman.

The jukebox took place in Evanston, Illinois.

Alice Coltrane
"Journey In Satchidananda"
From *Journey In Satchidananda* (Impulse!) 1972

Hamid Drake: Yeah, this is Alice Coltrane, "Journey In Satchidananda".

You had an association with Alice Coltrane. Can you talk about that and your relationship to this music?

Yeah, I started a group called Turiya, Hamid Drake's Turiya: Honoring Alice Coltrane. And I had the great fortune of meeting her at age 16. She was doing a concert at Ravinia [festival in Illinois] with Charlie Haden on bass and Ben Riley on drums, and after the concert we went up on stage and met her. I was working at the Bahá'í National Center [for the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh] at that time. In the mailroom, I was in a work study programme where I would get out of school at 12pm and go to work. I was actually a practising Bahá'í and I had some Bahá'í books that I gave her. She signed a prayer book that I had, and she wrote, "Dear Hank, may the all-pervading life force of the universe be with you, protect you, and nurture you". We exchanged addresses and we wrote a couple letters to each other. And then I noticed with her next recording, *Universal Consciousness*, on the inside jacket of the LP there was a quote from one of the books.

The thing about Turiya, or Alice Coltrane, when I first met her, it had left such a huge impression on me that I still feel to this day, and it's become more and more and more obvious as time went on for me. In a very special, subtle way, she let me know that it's important to keep going with the arts, to find your own voice, and that there is power in music, there's power in the arts, and music can have a transformative effect. I mean, her music certainly did with my life. It was amazing seeing her because she was a great musician, but also a great spiritual being. And then of course, as time went on, I learn more and more about her. I have just about all the books she wrote about her experiences as a devotee on, you might say, a spiritual path. But also I respect her highly because she was a an African-American woman doing this incredible music. Later on, I had a chance to tour for five years with Pharoah Sanders. So yeah, she's still very important to me, so important that I wanted to do a project honouring her. We do these projects honouring all these other folks – why not her? Because she had a very profound effect.

Dennis Brown
"Emanuel"
From *Wolf & Leopards* (DEB Music) 1977

This is reggae, of course. Let's see if I recognise the singer. I mean, the group sounds like Burning Spear's group. But it could be Dennis Brown.

This is Dennis Brown, produced by Niney The Observer, and released on his own DEB Music label. Do you know this song?

From my reggae days, it is starting to click. He had a particular style of singing, and then singers that came after him modeled their singing after him.

It's "Emanuel" aka "Emmanuel God Is With Us". You played in reggae bands in Chicago.

You know, reggae had, and still has, a huge influence upon me. The first time I heard reggae, I was a young teenager. One of our neighbours, his family was from Jamaica, and his name was Stoney. Reggae was always blasting out of their home, some of the early Jimmy Cliff stuff, things like that. And then later on, we were both on the same reggae scene – I was playing drums and he was a singer in different groups.

But one of the things about reggae that was very influential for me was the spiritual aspect. I found the whole Rastafarian culture to be very interesting, their honouring and worshiping of Haile Selassie, them being deep followers also of Marcus Garvey. In some aspects they reminded me of the Nation of Islam. They wanted a homeland in their own way, but in Africa, and they weren't necessarily separatists. And their culture was about music; and Nation of Islam, the culture wasn't so much about the music, but there are certain Ital aspects regarding food and stuff like that, you can find in them both. But the Rastas were about spreading love and peace throughout the world through the philosophy and the music. And I found them to be very accepting of all folks.

Also, it made me go deeper into certain African roots. In Chicago, reggae was one of the special musics that brought all kinds of different people together, achieving something that even the Chicago jazz world hadn't quite done. Reggae for some reason broke down all of those walls and barriers.

Sam Jones
"Some Kind Of Mean"
From *The Soul Society* (Riverside) 1960

The way the bass player and the drummer play together reminds me of Dannie Richmond and [Charles] Mingus. Is it Mingus?

It's not. It's Sam Jones.

It's good. Who is the bass player? Great saxophonist. They have that Mingus-Dannie Richmond kind of connection.

It's on Riverside. The saxophonist is Cannonball Adderley. On this particular tune, Jones plays the cello, Keter Betts the bass. The drummer is Jones's close associate, Louis Hayes.

I'm not that familiar with the drumming of Louis Hayes. I mean, I've heard him, but he's not one of the drummers that I followed so much.

Nat Adderley plays cornet.
It's beautiful.
You're known to be part of a bass and drums team with William Parker.
Yeah. And a few others. But William, for sure. Yeah.
Could you say a bit about that partnership?
Well, William and I have a very interesting history. The person who brought us together was Peter Brötzmann. Peter came to Chicago for the first time, I think, in 1987 to do a concert with two other musicians at Southend Musicworks through Leo Krumpholz. The other two European musicians got caught up at the Canadian-US border, because they had problems with visas. Peter called Leo and said, 'Hey, is there a drummer in Chicago that maybe I can do a duet with?' That was our first meeting. And there's an interesting reggae connection with this story. I was familiar with Peter, but we had never met. When Leo asked me, I said yes. I will need a drum set, because after that, I have to do a gig down the street at the Edge Of The Looking Glass with one of the reggae groups that I'm playing with, and we're opening up for Mutabaruka. Peter and I meet, we do a soundcheck, I soundcheck with the reggae guys, and then Mutabaruka's group is going to soundcheck. The drummer comes up to me, says, 'Hey, man, can I use your drum kit for our set, too?' I said, 'No problem. By the way. I'm doing a concert down the street with this saxophone player from Germany. Why don't you guys come to the concert?' And so Mutabaruka, the drummer, bass player, guitar player, keyboard player, everybody came to the concert. They're sitting in the front row. So when Peter and I started, I looked at them and they were like [drops his jaw].

Mutabaruka wanted a copy so he could play it on his radio show. We actually became very good friends, so that first experience of playing with Peter was pretty profound, also for the way the music affected these guys from Jamaica who had never been exposed to anything like that. From that Peter and I, we formed this bond. He came back to Chicago again, and a couple years after that he invited myself, Toshinori Kondo and William Parker to Wuppertal in Germany to form Die Like A Dog.

William and I knew of each other, but we had never met or played together before. And a few moments after doing our first piece, we both sensed this connection that we had. It was pretty extraordinary, because I felt like I was playing with someone that I had known forever. He had the same feeling. In fact, years later we were dubbed as brothers from different mothers by the trumpeter Lewis Barnes.

There's just so many similarities in our lives in general, what we think about, what we read, what we listen to, it just felt so easy and natural to play with him. And he felt the same way. After that first experience with Peter, Die Like A Dog toured for a little bit, and then William invited me to New York to join this group he was forming, the O'Neal's Porch group. The music was very different from Peter's music, and I didn't know what to expect from this particular recording. It was all pretty straight ahead, most of the music that William composes himself – it's beautiful, but it's all pretty straightforward. I felt at home in his compositions, you know, and I felt that he felt at home with me playing them.

When I am in New York, I'll stay with him and Patricia [Nicholson]. I play at the Vision Festival a lot, and we

Fred Anderson

have toured all over the world together, many different places. We are good travel companions, good friends and music brothers. The only persons that I've had a consistent musical relationship like that is maybe Adam Rudolph, of course Fred Anderson, he's always been a mentor, and Douglas Ewart too. But with William, since 1989, I don't think there's been a year when we didn't play together.

Fred Anderson
"Syene"
From *Back At The Velvet Lounge* (Delmark) 2003
[Within four notes] Of course, yeah, that's Baba Fred.
I don't think that a lot of people from outside of here get what Fred Anderson is to Chicago. But you have a really personal connection.
He was born in the same town, in Monroe, Louisiana. But him being older, of course, him and his mother moved up from Louisiana way, way earlier. My mother and Fred's mother, even though Fred's was older, were really good friends. And then my father and Fred became really close also. We lived in their house for a couple years at one time, this was in Evanston [Illinois], and then we moved across the street. There's one thing I do remember very specifically about Fred. When he would come home from working at the Oriental Hotel in Evanston, the first thing he would do, he got down into the basement and practised. We didn't start playing music together until I was 18 or something like that. But I have images, when I was really young of musicians coming to the house to play with Fred. And I didn't know any of them.
Who were they?
Joseph Jarman, Jack DeJohnette, you know, he hadn't moved to New York yet. Lester Lashley. Also, of course, Billy Brimfield. Charles Clark, of course, Malachi Favors, Steve McCall. All the early AACM guys. So Fred was many things for me. He was like a second father. He was a teacher. And he really falls into that whole tradition of mentoring, which is very important. It's an ancient tradition: you have a mentor, you learn from that mentor and then go out and try and develop your own voice. For him, playing music was important. But just as important was providing a space where musicians could play and develop their sound, develop their craft, and that's why for him it was so important to have a venue. The first one was The Birdhouse, that was on Lincoln Avenue close in Montrose, and then The Velvet Lounge. Everybody learned from him. I mean the music of course, but also, you remember at the Velvet Lounge, oftentimes you see Fred working the door, working behind the bar, and on stage.

Brigitte Fontaine
"Comme À La Radio"
From *Comme À La Radio* (Saravah) 1969
The language is French. It's funny, because the music sounds very Chicago based.
That's not accidental.
In some ways, it reminds me of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, but I'm trying to think of the vocalist, I have to say I'm not sure.
This is Brigitte Fontaine.
Oh, OK, of course.
She made this record when The Art Ensemble came to Paris. She saw them, and said, 'I want to make a record with those guys.' But with Wadada Leo Smith on trumpet instead of Lester Bowie. Having spent so much of your career in Europe, could you say a bit about being an American musician who must spend so much time in Europe?
It's been really interesting. In the beginning for me, it was mostly working with American musicians in Europe, you know, Fred Anderson, Don Cherry, Ernest Dawkins, many other people. I spent a lot of time travelling Europe with Pharoah Sanders, and later with Archie Shepp, and then with Mandingo Griot Society. And then, as years went on, my work also evolved into working with many different European musicians.

One thing I have noticed about working with a lot of the European musicians, there always seems to be this great appreciation for Chicago. They always felt that there was like a Chicago sound. There's always been this real community of music, and it's very different than New York. You go to New York to make it, but Chicago is a place where you stay to develop your sound. It's not as hard as New York, as far as making a living. As much as I spend time in Europe, I still meet so many people that still have this great appreciation and wonderment about Chicago. Not only for jazz, but Chicago blues and folk music. There was a time when I was able to make a pretty good living in Chicago playing all the reggae clubs, playing the folk music clubs with different groups. For a long time, I played in this Irish folk band called The Dooley Brothers. And singers like Faith Pillow. I've worked for quite some time on the blues scene, with the guitarist Lefty Dizz and his brother Johnny Dollar. Chicago was one of those places where, if you had enough openness, you could bounce from scene to scene. I got a little bit of a taste of all the different musical scenes in Chicago, and also the world music scene too, from studying Indian music.

Don Cherry's New Researches with Naná Vasconcelos
"Ganesh"
From *Organic Music Theater: Festival De Jazz De Chateauvallon 1972* (Blank Forms) 2021
It's Don Cherry, playing piano and singing. There's a percussionist there, it could be Naná Vasconcelos. It reminds me of the pre-Codona stuff, but it sounds

Glenda H Kapsalis

Unseen Worlds

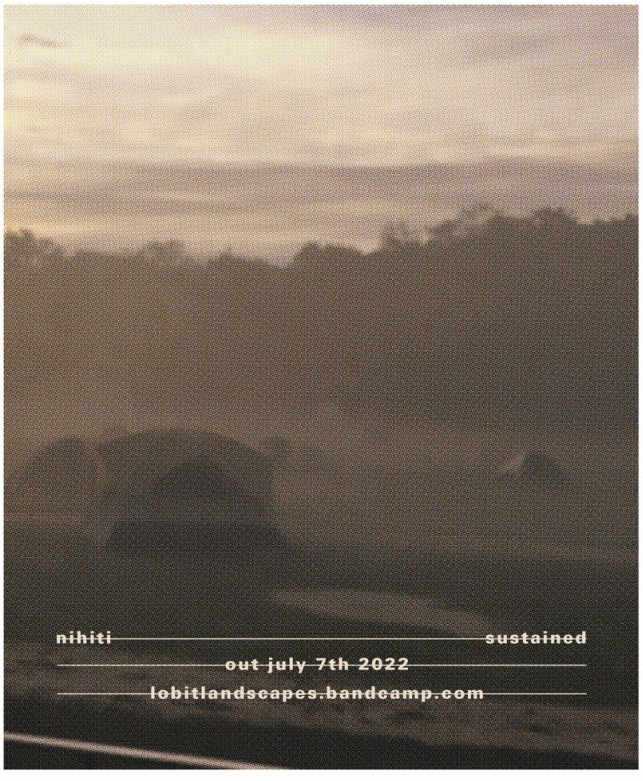
HAVING BEEN
BUILT ON SAND

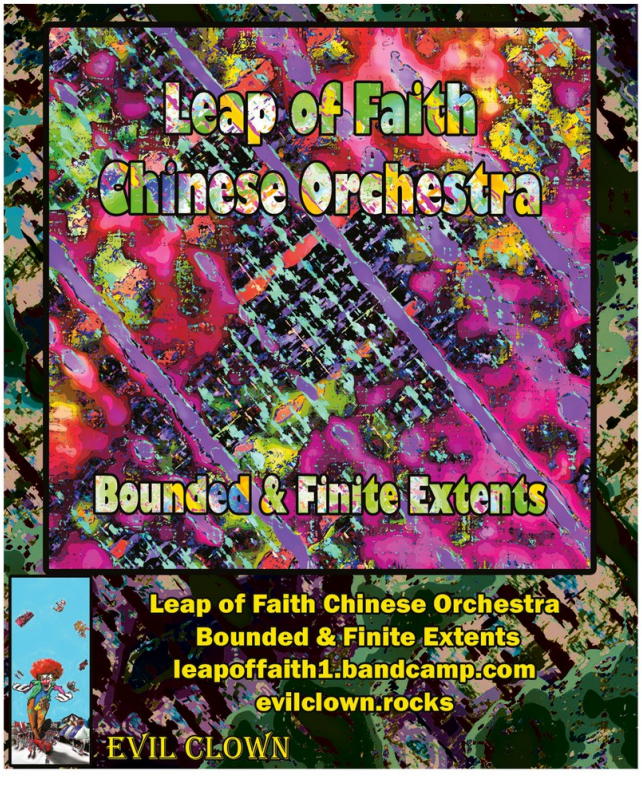
WITH ANOTHER BASE
(BASIS) IN FACT

AUF SAND GEBAUT

MIT EINER ANDERN BASIS
TATSÄCHLICH

DICKIE LANDRY
LAWRENCE WEINER





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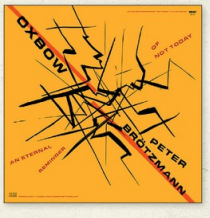

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like a lot of the stuff from Organic Music Society – like one of the pieces I used to do with Don, actually.

This record was recorded in Chateauvallon by Don Cherry's New Researches featuring Naná Vasconcelos, Organic Music.

Yep, Organic Music Society.

They all piled into a van, Don, his wife and kids, Christer Bothén. They picked up a puppet theatre in Copenhagen and drove to the South of France.

Ah, Christer Bothén, yeah, I just played with him a week and a half ago in Belgium at the Sound In Motion Summer Bummer Festival. It was our first time playing together actually. But he taught Don donso ngoni. What's the name of this recording?

***Organic Music Theatre: Festival De Jazz De Chateauvallon, 1972*.**

Organic Music Theatre. It was also sometimes called Organic Music Society. Yeah, this is the kind of stuff that would happen in Tågarp. We were living with Don in 1978. People were just around, he's playing all these different things and someone just happens to have a recorder going, just free and easy. Beautiful!

You worked with him for a while.

Yeah, I worked with him since we first met in 1978 on and off until he died in 1995. I also did his last tour with him. Don, he was another mentor, inspiration, scholar, poet, father. He was hard to keep up with sometimes, because so many ideas would be flowing through him. I considered him to be not only a mentor but also a good friend. He passed on to the people that worked with him, it's like a vibration, a way to find your own voice and freedom in the music, to develop your language, do research, study, to be inclusive.

He was another one like Alice Coltrane who openly showed the spiritual nature of music too. Don was a practising Buddhist, his main practice was Vajrayana, Tibetan Buddhism, you know, him and Moki. But Don, he spoke about all the different sacred traditions, and there was no distinction between that and just life. It wasn't like he was doing something special, this was just as it is. And no matter where he was, he would have an immediate effect upon people. He was one of those kinds of people you instantly fall in love with. I mean, he had his challenges in his life, but still his humanity would shine forth. I think he probably all his life considered himself a student, that there was always something to learn and to share. And set certain musical standards too, I mean, if you listen to his recordings like *Relativity Suite*, there's so many different things happening there, conduction wise, stylistically, musically, bringing all these different instruments together with strings. And then you listen to his record *Hear & Now*, it's like a funk rock record, in a way, but still, the same principles.

Jaimie Branch

"Nuevo Roquero Estéreo"

From *Fly Or Die II: Bird Dogs Of Paradise* (International Anthem) 2019

It's almost like Chicago Afrocentric, like Chicago meets Fela Kuti or something. It reminds me of Art Ensemble a little bit, too.

This is pretty recent.

Oh. That sounds like Chad Taylor's rhythm. Might be Rob Mazurek on trumpet.

It's someone who's played with both Rob and you.

The trumpet player? Yeah. Oh, that could be Jaimie. And this is probably Jaimie's group with Lester St Louis, Chad and Jason Ajemian.

This is Fly Or Die's second record.

Yeah, Jaimie, man. [Her death in August 2022] was sad, yeah. The last time we saw each other was the Vision Festival. It was me, Jamie and Luke Stewart. We were all hanging out together in the balcony at Roulette, watching a concert with William Parker. It's funny because that night, Jaimie and I were talking about this duet we did together in Kongsberg [Norway], getting ahold of that because we wanted to put it out. Amazing musician and person, too. We all have our struggles, and she was going through some things, but she had a beautiful concept and it was like Fly Or Die, you know? She was meant to play this music. And when she did it, she did it. She had developed a concept, a sound. You can hear some of her influences, but still, she had her own way, very Chicago. Her hats and everything, like, 'Didn't I see you at Comiskey Park' or something? Or 'Didn't I see you at a Cubs game'?

She was a big baseball fan.

Yeah. She reminds me a lot of Don Cherry, kind of Ed Blackwell-ish groove – the not very long, not very short phrases that Don would play. Extreme improvisation distills the groove, but at the same time, if they want it to go somewhere else, they could very easily. And she had a great group that worked so beautifully together. She's going to be missed. I was so happy that William mentioned Jaimie the other night [at Chicago Jazz Festival]. Because she was like Chicago, New York, New York, Chicago. She was both places.

Irreversible Entanglements

"Blues Ideology"

From *Who Sent You?* (Don Giovanni/International Anthem) 2021

It reminds me of [vocalist and poet] Moor Mother, Irreversible Entanglements.

That's who this is.

It's interesting, because her voice sometimes is very feminine and it can be very masculine. I've worked with them. When we play together, at first when I was listening, I wasn't sure if it was a man or woman. But yeah, Tcheser [Holmes] on drums. That's a really wonderful trumpet player in this group, too [Aquiles Navarro]. A beautiful group. They're improvising, and they're making it so they can go from form into this open space in a very seamless way, which is not that easy to do all the time. For me, what really showed me how to do that was Billy Hart with Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi. Now, I remember when talking to Billy Hart, I thanked him for giving that gift to us, that way of like playing, hitting these grooves and taking it to open space and coming back to the plan. And he said, 'Hamid, nobody's ever told me that before.' I said, really? You gotta be kidding!

One of the most striking things about your drumming is how you will transition so rapidly. You will hit a great groove, and some people might stay with it, but you're more like, OK, there's that, next, next next, almost like you are shuffling a deck of cards.

That's interesting, it's kind of like shuffling the deck. To me, drumming is very much about orchestration, and the orchestration is always changing. You listen to these amazing classical symphonies and the music is always changing. Drumming is just like that.

Peter Brötzmann/Milford Graves/William Parker

"Side C"

From *Historic Music Past Tense Future* (Black Editions Archive) 2022

Well, some of the drumming sounds like my drumming, haha! There's one bass player. Sounds like one bass, it sounds like William. If there's two drummers, the second drummer might be Paul Lytton.

There's just one drummer. I think it's telling that he sounds like two.

Are there more instruments coming?

One more.

OK. This also sounds like Milford Graves too.

That's who it is.

Yes, Milford Graves. I got a lot from Milford, so at first when I was listening I was thinking of myself! This is William and Milford. [Immediately as Brötzmann starts playing] Peter.

It's from 2002, but Black Editions Archive just released it.

Peter and I were just talking about this particular concert coming out, but I hadn't heard it. There's something else that's supposed to come out, I think with Milford.

It was at [New York's] CBGBs.

Oh, CBGBs, wow! It's a pretty good sound, considering, you know?

Michael Ehlers recorded it. What did you get from Milford Graves?

I'm going to phrase this in a weird way, but the scientific spiritual technology of drumming. And it being a mother and father instrument. What I got from him was the power and the healing effect that music can have. And that you have to have a very serious approach. He would get upset with me, when I'd come to New York: 'Hamid, why don't you visit me when you come?' Then he'd get upset with William for not bringing me out to Queens! We became very close. He was a percussionist, musician, artist, doctor very in tune with the ancestral, spiritual roots of drumming and rhythm from all over the world. He was one of the first to develop this type of multidimensional playing, where you're using all of your limbs, like Tony Williams with Miles Davis or Elvin Jones, but from a whole different rhythmic perspective and the type of independence and freedom he had. We've got to remember that Milford started off playing Latin music and then he moved into this other thing. And the way that he developed in bringing out different tonal qualities of the drums, you know, using his elbows, and the type of sticking that he developed, and tuning. Most of your traditional jazz drummers are tuned very high up. Milford, he tuned very low, so he could get more of a hand drum sound.

But also, the technology of vibration and how that affects us. He was very serious and very conscious about the whole thing, and the heart therapy stuff he developed later with computers. He was very adamant about knowing the roots of things. And also, his minimalist approach, with very multidimensional sounds. Most of the times, especially later, he would only use one cymbal to create various tones and tonalities. He introduced theatre into the improvised music world. The Art Ensemble were doing that too. He was a painter. He was a martial artist. He was a very good cook. He was involved in many worlds but they all came together in the music – music influenced things, the other things influenced music. ☐

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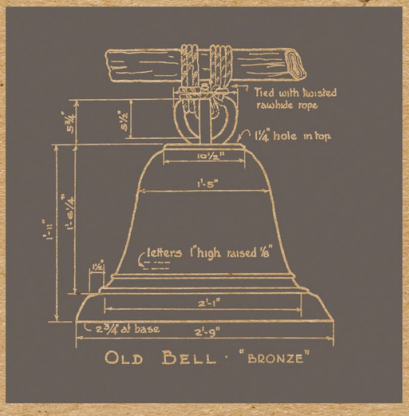

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NOVEMBER 14th 2022

Natalie Mering aka Weyes Blood in New York, October 2022

Let It Bleed

The violence hidden inside the lush nostalgic songs of
Weyes Blood
explores anomie and the disintegration of the social fabric in Los Angeles.
By **Emily Pothast**. Photography by **Tina Tyrell**

In early 2015, I saw Natalie Mering perform as Weyes Blood at Hollow Earth Radio in Seattle, on tour with harpist and longterm associate Mary Lattimore. At the time, Mering was touring her second LP *The Innocents* – filled with vocal melodies layered like Renaissance madrigals over folk instrumentations reminiscent of Vashti Bunyan or Shirley Collins. I can still remember how her voice filled the tiny room with a warm, commanding presence.

There were only a handful of people at the show, but among them were A&R scouts for Sub Pop, Mering tells me over a Zoom connection nearly eight years later. After one more album for Mexican Summer, 2016's *Front Row Seat To Earth,* Weyes Blood moved to Sub Pop to release 2019's *Titanic Rising*. This period has seen Mering's studio arrangements become more subtle, complex and ambitious, likewise her lyrics, which marry personal expressions of loss and yearning with wry insights about contemporary culture. Her new album *And In The Darkness, Hearts Aglow* explores climate change, social alienation and an uneasiness regarding the state of our relationship with technology.

In a video for "It's Not Just Me, It's Everybody", Mering dances with a cartoon smartphone on the stage of a classic Los Angeles theatre. This animated sequence is a homage to Gene Kelly's dance with Jerry Mouse in the 1945 musical comedy *Anchors Aweigh*. In Weyes Blood's version, the theatre is lined with bodies that have been devoured by her cartoon companion. It's an unsettling melange, made more so by its sharp contrast with the song's hypnotic soft rock groove.

"It just made sense to reference some kind of Technicolor masterpiece," Mering says. On one level, the bodies are a stand-in for the loss of life during the pandemic, but they also suggest a loss of in-person community that has been accelerated by the rise of technologically mediated interaction – hence the smartphone feasting on the flesh of the fallen. "I felt like it said a lot about how I was feeling," she continues. "I love anything that's a little deranged and tonally hard to quantify. I felt like a beautiful, apocalyptic backdrop with cheerful dancing around death – I mean, that's kind of the way I feel we're going to have to approach the future. We've always lived alongside the suffering in some ways. It's not necessarily new, even though the problems feel so unprecedentedly abstract and different."

All but one of the tracks on *Hearts Aglow* were co-produced by Mering with Jonathan Rado in Studio Three of EastWest Studios in Los Angeles, the same room where The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* was recorded. "There's definitely something about this space that's kind of magical," she enthuses. Whereas *Titanic Rising* relied on layers of overdubs to craft its chamber pop ambience, the new album has a slightly more live feel, created in the studio with Weyes Blood's regular backing band playing together all at once. "I write it and then I kind of come in with a little bit of wiggle room, in case something happens in the room that's really exciting," comments Mering about the recording process. "But yeah, I try to come in with pretty fully formed songs. I think I have too much of a controlling perfectionism to like, write with other people."

I ask about Mering's history of playing in other bands – the way she sees it, she hasn't done much of it. "I started Weyes Blood when I was like 15, because I couldn't find people to be in a band with. I think it was always my goal to be in a band. I wanted to be like a Kim Gordon or a Tina Weymouth – the girl in the band. But nobody around me was as serious or cared as much or had the same taste as me, or was ready to sacrifice their whole life to do music and tour in a van. I think that's what ended up making me a solo artist – being a troubadour and not really meeting anybody else that was on my wavelength."

It was only after she started playing solo shows that people began asking her to join their projects, and she served brief stints in two: singing for the "weird metal band" Satanized, and playing guitar with underground legends Jackie-O Motherfucker.

"I got really into experimental music as a young teen working at a record store," says Mering, recalling the time she spent combing the new arrivals section and writing down college radio playlists in an era when mainstream stations were dominated by acts like NSYNC and Britney Spears, developing an appreciation for artists like John Cale, with whom she recently collaborated.

I ask how this interest in leftfield music informs her work. "I think it's interesting that I get compared to music from the 70s a lot," she begins. "I also really love classical music and Tin Pan Alley songwriters, and doo-wop and stuff that probably informed a lot of the musicians of the 70s too.

"I do really love the song as an art form," she

continues, "and I do really love noise and more destructive sound deconstruction as a philosophy, and trying to combine the two in a way that's both beautiful and maybe like, a little subliminally kind of violent underneath. It's a very interesting balance, and I think it makes it so the music is not overly nostalgic, but hopefully has a little nod towards the future, without being innovative to the point of being unrelatable. I think that at a certain point, I decided it would be really cool if anybody of any age, any walk of life could hear my music and understand the sentiment. I didn't want it to be coded in any kind of a trend. I wanted it to feel a bit more timeless."

At least some of the nostalgia that gets read into Weyes Blood's music must come from the use of vintage gear, like the LinnDrum that anchors "Twin Flame". Such instruments can have a powerful emotional impact, insofar as they remind us, consciously or otherwise, of other times when we've heard similar sounds. "Totally," she agrees. "I listen to so much Jan Hammer, who did the soundtrack for [TV series] *Miami Vice,* and I think it's because I want to go back to feeling like a kid who's just flipping channels. Or the music for *Unsolved Mysteries*. All the synth dudes that just did soundtracks in the 80s – when I listen to their music it just takes me right back to this very specific place that I just want to live in always, because it's anonymous and nostalgic and made for TV. I pick up on that when I'm recording too, creating that time machine. I try not to make it too on the nose, because I don't believe in making music just for nostalgic purposes. But I do believe that nostalgia can be used in a transportive way – especially when you couple it with something completely new."

An aesthetic of violence lurking beneath a beautiful surface somehow seems integral to Los Angeles, a city where spectacles are manufactured on a massive scale, and where many people never stop performing. Mering was born in southern California and spent her childhood there. After spending her teen years and young adulthood in Philadelphia, Portland, Baltimore and Brooklyn, she returned to a very different Los Angeles than the one she grew up in. "I think, before the internet took off, LA really had its own vibe and its own quality of music and people and style, and now that so many people have moved there from other places. I like to joke that the entire DIY of the United States moved to LA to die," she laughs. "So many people were like, 'oh, we're going to LA', and then nothing really came from that."

For each city she's lived in, Mering describes what she sees as a different approach to musical experimentation. "I think on the East Coast, there were more noise artists that sided with the improvisational jazz or academic kind of realm, and then I think what I really liked about the West Coast was The Skaters – this kind of sunny LA/San Diego style drone music – or like this band The Hospitals from the Bay, which was more like a garage rock band, but with a lot of noise qualities."

When it comes to LA, she reads the lack of cohesion in the scene as symptomatic of an era when many artists are more concerned with the metrics of streaming and social media platforms than they are with connecting with other human beings. "I believe that that actually isn't a way to quantify success," she says. For Mering, the live performance environment provides the best gauge of her success as a songwriter. "Making an album is really abstract. You never really know how good it is until it comes out," she asserts, "and even then, you never really know exactly how good it is until a couple years later. But the show is a great place where you can go and just kind of communicate directly with your audience, and have a connection that surpasses any kind of numbers."

Much of Mering's approach to making music is rooted in her upbringing. "My parents were a part of the born again movement," she relays. "Which was: all of the hippies took so much acid they went Christian. They were secular, and then they got saved. I think, around that time Bob Dylan got saved too – when he made [1979's] *Slow Train Coming*? So it was like a huge cultural shift that happened in the early 80s in general. People returning to some semblance of a community, or like a religion.

"Before that, my parents had been kind of weird music people. So I grew up in this kind of purgatory of, like, we had Stevie Wonder records, and Joni Mitchell, and XTC, very eclectic music taste, but also, I wasn't allowed to watch the *Care Bears* because they were, like, communist. It was a pretty interesting set of opposing forces, and I think it made me the weird person that I am."

Mering recalls encountering books by Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung and being drawn to the idea of archetypes as an antidote to fundamentalism. "Once I no longer practised Christianity as a dogmatic religion but instead went on my own journey spiritually, I realised I don't have to completely denounce my upbringing and move into a space of meaninglessness, because that would have been very depressing for me. I do believe in unforeseen forces and things that are beyond our comprehension. So it was cool to get in and make my own cosmology."

Many things about Weyes Blood – like making a video where she dresses up like Gene Kelly – make a lot more sense when you realise that there are whole swathes of popular culture that Mering was not allowed to consume as a child. "I was kind of raised on a lot of movies from the 1940s because there weren't any sex scenes or things my parents didn't want me to watch in those movies," she explains. "So I do feel like it made it so that I was kind of out of time with everybody else, and I bond with other people who were raised that way because we feel we missed out on some cultural stuff. But I definitely was sneaking it on the sly. I'd go to friends' houses and watch horror films.

"I feel bad for my parents because I think that when you create rules and take things away from a child, those things will become more enticing and interesting. My interest in the macabre and occult stuff came from it being this totally forbidden realm. So it's a very interesting mixture of gratitude, for at least being raised in a household where there was a lot of hope and belief that anything was possible, and that love conquers all –these are really good things – and also the kind of weird restrictive qualities and the morality of Christianity can become pretty distorted. So yeah, it's complicated!" she laughs. "In the end I'm just stoked that I turned out the way I did."

An embodied quality to Mering's songwriting on *Hearts Aglow* makes the album feel even more personal than *Titanic* at times. On the lush heartbreak anthem "Grapevine", she sings, *"California's my body and your fire runs over me/My car broke down in an old ghost town right around where they got James Dean"*.

I'm struck by how this lyric combines an image of how climate change exacerbated wildfires with a romanticised image of car culture. In US mythology, California's in particular, driving is most always equated with freedom, yet our love of driving is one of the major reasons why California is always on fire. That the things we use to escape our problems are precisely the things that imprison us makes for a sinister feedback loop.

"I recently read this book by Neil Postman called *Amusing Ourselves To Death*," says Mering. "It's so fascinating because I think a lot of people have this perception that technology and this whole surveillance state was going to be more like a Big Brother thing; we were going to be very censored, very controlled. But in truth, it ended up being a little bit more like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* in that we would be so distracted by the pleasure of entertainment – how entertaining our phones are – that there would be no need to ban books because people wouldn't even want to read any more. There would be no need for surveillance because people would openly give their information and openly participate in being researched. I think that was one of those revelations for me where I'm like, this is a panopticon of our own making. We have kind of willingly participated in this situation in a way, which makes it even more difficult to escape."

This feeling of insurmountability weighs heavily on tracks like "The Worst Is Done", a song about pandemic-induced social isolation that sounds like something Fleetwood Mac might write if they ran out of cocaine and took a long look in the mirror. *"They say the worst is done/But I think the worst has yet to come"*, Mering sings bleakly.

"Some people are like, oh, that's so pessimistic, but I just think it's kind of the time we're living in," she tells me. "I think the pandemic was kind of a weird wake up call for a lot of people who might not have realised how much our social fabric has disintegrated, or how much things really have changed or are changing. So I think it's just kind of the beginning in a lot of ways."

Despite this harsh toke, there is still a glimmer of hope on the horizon – which, Mering promises, will elaborated upon in a forthcoming album closing out this trilogy. This glimmer is alluded to in the album's striking cover art featuring a photograph of Mering with a glowing heart. This effect was created by a Hollywood special effects house deploying a custom-built light embedded within a patch of artificial skin. "I wanted it to look a little sci-fi, a little sacred heart, a little *ET* meets *Blade Runner* meets *Pride And Prejudice*," she laughs. The image also evokes the chemiluminescent glow sticks one might encounter at a rave, a visual metaphor that links the cover art with the album's vulnerable expressions of heartbreak. "I do believe in the glow stick thing: that you have to crack it a couple times to make it glow," concludes Mering. "A heart can't really feel at full capacity until it's been broken a couple times." ☐ Weyes Blood's *And In The Darkness, Hearts Aglow* is released by Sub Pop

WHEATFIELD

Meta Machine Music

After taking to the streets in 1968 and lending strings to Hendrix

Richard Pinhas

began a sci-fi odyssey through rock and noise that continues today alongside Merzbow and Wolf Eyes. By **Daniel Spicer**. Photography by **Senta Simon**

Richard Pinhas asks me to FaceTime him on his phone. When he picks up, he's slightly distracted. "I prepared everything and I lost all my papers," he laughs. He gives me a quick tour of his apartment, briefly pointing the phone into a room full of amps and hardware before arriving in a bright, book-lined room. "I get my cigarette, an ashtray and I will be with you in two seconds," he says and wanders off. The sounds of busy daytime Nantes fill the air. He returns, settles, runs a hand through a head of hair impressively generous for a man approaching his 72nd birthday, and lights his cigarette. "My English is getting badder," he warns with a laugh. "How can this happen? Getting old and losing your English!" He laughs again and graciously begins our conversation. "My name is Richard. I am at your service."

There's a lot to talk about. As guitarist, founder and leader of underground band Heldon, he's widely regarded as one of France's most innovative and influential musicians, and a pioneer of electronic rock. The seven albums Heldon released from 1974–79 blended Pinhas's guitar – showing strong stylistic links to the delay-heavy, time-lag approach of Robert Fripp's Frippertronics – with drums and synthesizers, creating future focused psychedelia that still reverberates today. Echoes of Heldon's cosmic machine music can be heard in the work of artists as diverse as Acid Mothers Temple, Oneohtrix Point Never and Bitchin Bajas.

Beginning with 1977's *Rhizosphere*, he's also released over a dozen solo albums, including masterpieces such as his first post-Heldon LP, 1978's *Iceland*: a mysterious mix of bleak robo-rhythms, bodily analogue burbles, warm, amniotic synths and austere, electronic mists, seeded with otherworldly guitar solos. Heard today, it still sounds both weird and welcoming – and utterly fresh. At the same time, he's collaborated widely, with fellow astral travellers including members of Magma, Ruins and Acid Mothers, and extensively with Australian multi-instrumentalist Oren Ambarchi on albums such as 2014's monumentally guitar-heavy slab of 21st century prog rock, *Tikkun*.

Along the way, he's become an unlikely eminence grise of noise. He's forged a strong partnership with Japanese noise doyen Merzbow. They began performing together in 2007, releasing *Keio Line*, the first of several collaborations, in 2008. "I did not know anything about noise," confesses Pinhas. "I was more in the jazz connection or whatever." Even so, it has proved to be a fruitful relationship: when we speak, he has just returned from a Japanese tour with Merzbow and Hungarian drummer Balázs Pándi. "On our first tour, 20 years ago, the organiser told the public and me that it will be our first and last tour in Japan – it will not be again. After, I have at least one Japanese tour a year or one every two years."

From the start, the collaboration has been an opportunity for Pinhas to incorporate the digital aesthetic he's pursued exclusively since the 1990s with Merzbow's more analogue approach. "Merzbow, at this time, didn't want to hear about computer music, whatever. He wanted everything to be done by hands and with pedals. Sometimes, for example, Keiji Haino came with 200 pedals and he had an assistant. I was looking at him and he would say, 'Why won't it work? Cheap Japanese make!' and I say 'OK, 200 pedals, it will not work!'"

Meanwhile, Pinhas has struck up an alliance with US noise trio Wolf Eyes. Released in 2013, *Victoriaville Mai 2011* captures the first date of a North American tour, which brought Pinhas, Merzbow and Wolf Eyes on stage together for the first time, with Pinhas's scorched guitar seamlessly blending with brutal blasts and coruscating shrieks. "I adapt," he shrugs. "They said, 'You will be the fourth member of the band.' It was very easy. It was such an adventure for me. They said, 'Do your stuff', and I don't remember even if we exchanged words. The last week of the tour was very *inside*."

Pinhas's newest joint production with Merzbow is *Coda*, released on the French Bam Balam label which provides the platform for much of his work. Also featuring Oren Ambarchi on motor guitar, Swedish artist Senza Testa on synths and Florian Tatard on accordion, it finds his guitar deeply immersed in huge, heavenly ascensions of ambient storm. Tatard also forms part of a reconstituted Heldon – a trio including drummer Arthur Narcy – who released *Antelast* this year, described by Pinhas as "the very last Heldon album". There's a sense of finality about both of these releases, and indeed Pinhas is looking ahead to his grand finale: "When time will come, my very last album – very, very last, just not now – will be a power trio with Oren Ambarchi and Stephen O'Malley [of Sunn O)))]. They gave me their OK."

The journey began with the guitar. "I started to play, like a lot of children, with songs like "Telstar"," remembers Pinhas. "Everything went very naturally." As with many burgeoning guitar heroes of his generation, Pinhas moved on from this foundational 1962 instrumental by The Tornados to the blues. "I have been very, very much influenced by the so-called British blues. John Mayall was driving to us what was the great English blues invasion. Mainly Jeff Beck, Fleetwood Mac – Peter Green was the absolute model for me. Then I discovered Albert King, BB King and all the Kings in the world!"

From there, Pinhas was fully primed to have his mind blown by one of the genre's greatest innovators – and one of his enduring inspirations. "I was a great, great fan of Hendrix," he states, going on to enthusiastically recount when he met his hero. Hendrix was in his ascendency at the time, performing in Paris in 1966 as the support act for French pop singer Johnny Hallyday. When the American urgently needed some replacement strings, the concert's organiser – an older friend of Pinhas's – put his team in touch with the fledgling guitarist. "I got a phone call from the record company saying, 'Richard, do you want to talk to Jimi Hendrix?' I say, of course, but I don't believe you are a real record company. I think it's a kind of joke. Anyway, they knew I had the exact strings he wanted. I gave him the strings, of course. It was an honour but he didn't realise how important it was for me. He took my hand and said, 'You're groovy, man.' I was 14! What can you expect better? He said, 'Are you coming tonight?' I said, yeah, yeah. My father drove me there. It was like a dream."

Naturally, Pinhas's first group was a blues rock outfit called Blues Convention – also featuring future

Richard Pinhas at home in Nantes, October 2022

Magma vocalist Klaus Blasquiz making his debut – who released a handful of Francophone singles at the beginning of the 70s. However, by 1972, Pinhas was ready to scuzz things up. His next project was the shortlived heavy psych outfit Schizo, who released two deeply dosed 45s in 1972. Hendrix's fingerprints are all over Pinhas's playing here, as he leans heavily on the wah-wah pedal and shreds like mad.

That raw, brain-blown sound has become more prevalent again in some of his later solo works. Does he still feel like he's playing rock 'n' roll today? "Yeah," he replies, immediate and emphatic. "I feel it again now." How about when he's playing with Merzbow? "I hope so!" he laughs. For sure, recent works with Merzbow bear fewer traces of the somewhat cold and calculated Frippertronic approach, falling back into white-hot improvisation – a development that seems to have taken even himself by surprise. "It was strange," he says. "When playing in London and we had two concerts in a row at some place, repeating the same thing – the difference between the first and the second day, it was very astonishing for me."

Around 1974, Schizo morphed into Heldon, making what Pinhas calls "hard and real synthesizer music," and releasing their first album *Électronique Guerilla* that year. Though the line-up remained fluid, there was one configuration that Pinhas considers "the perfect team": himself on guitar, François Auger on drums, Didier Batard on bass and, crucially, Patrick Gauthier on synths. "Believe me or not," Pinhas says, "until 1973, 1974 I had never heard any synthesizer music." His first encounter came from the cutting edge of jazz. "Herbie Hancock influenced me a lot in the way that the synthesizer came in the background." Here, he's presumably referring to albums such as *Crossings* (1972) and *Sextant* (1973), during Hancock's Mwandishi period, on which synth pioneer Patrick Gleeson's Moog and ARP 2600 add mood and colouration in a bold move away from the pitch-bending, front of stage solos of contemporaries like Jan Hammer.

It is, of course, tempting to mention Heldon's transporting synthscapes alongside German kosmische outfits such as Popol Vuh and Tangerine Dream operating around the same time – but Pinhas strenuously denies any correlation. "I was not influenced by the German synthesizer bands for only one reason – that I never heard it," he declares. "I heard people like Tangerine Dream or Klaus Schulze a very long time later – five or six albums later. The first and only band I fell in love with immediately were Kraftwerk. They were very friendly to us at this time and invited us to a TV show where they presented us as their electronic French brothers. The German electronic scene, except as mentioned, did not interest me, did not engage."

For Pinhas, the main point of difference between Heldon and the German groups is simple. "We had real instruments, real drums," he states. "It was very important for me to have a real drummer. I love a drummer who knows how to play in this kind of formation of three or four musicians. I believe in the three of rock 'n' roll: bass or synthesizer, guitar and at least a bom-bom. I need this but not to give the time, I need this to propose a kind of jungle of mechanical things."

In this respect, Heldon's steel-hard constructions were, paradoxically, closer in spirit to the baroque prog-fusion of French outfit Magma, led by the visionary quixotic drummer Christian Vander. "Magma were like us," Pinhas confirms. "They provided people open to rock 'n' roll with a very large palette of sounds. Christian Vander was my cousin. Stella, who married Christian was my direct cousin, so he was my cousin-in-law. So, we were really connected to Magma." In fact there was considerable crossover between the two outfits, with musicians such as synth player Patrick Gauthier and bassist Bernard Paganotti appearing in both at different times.

But it was more than just a question of personnel. Both Heldon and Magma presented their music through the prisms of richly imagined science fiction universes – even as they were profoundly different in style and substance. While Vander's idiosyncratic, soi-disant Zeuhl vision was based on a galaxy-spanning space opera concerning the fortunes of a civilisation on the distant planet Kobaïa, with lyrics sung and chanted in a language of his own devising, Heldon's instrumentals seemed more concerned with the fate of humanity much closer to home and in a much nearer future.

Not only did Heldon's electronic sound suggest some kind of computer intelligence, albums such as *Agneta Nilsson* (1976) and *Interface* (1977) were adorned with cover art exploring the meeting of man and machine – lurid illustrations such as might grace the covers of the long-running French science fiction comic book *Métal Hurlant*, which was first published around the same time.

For these reasons – as well as the astral dimensions that Heldon's music shared with the German kosmische outfits – both Magma and Heldon are regularly referred to as space rock. Pinhas vigorously refutes this generic description. Emailing a few days later – with a written style every bit as emphatic and passionate as his conversation – he tells me: "I never think that Magma was a space rock band. Neither Heldon… NEVER. We were some kind of Music WAR-Machines. Space music is too kind [a term]. We wanted Strong Hard War instruments like [the] instrumentation in Magma and the synths roles in Magma. [I have a] BAD, very bad feeling with [the name] space rock. We have always been pure ROCK N ROLL musicians and BAND just trying to see the DIFFERENCE. DIFFERENZ!"

Given the title of Heldon's first album *Électronique Guerilla*, and considering Pinhas's age and location, it seems inevitable that he was party to the revolutionary fervour fuelling the street-level revolts that rocked Paris in May 1968. "I was between 16 and 17," he recalls, confirming that he took part in protests "mainly against USA and the Vietnam War". Casting his mind back, he paints a vivid picture of the activities and attitudes of the teenaged weekend revolutionary. "Every Saturday night, all the girls went in dresses to cocktail bars and men with the ties – but you are 16 with a Molotov cocktail inside your coat to get an American car exploded! Not only me, we were hundreds."

Even so, he denies being a full-blown guerrilla. "Not really because I have never been Marxist-Leninist school. I'm, of course, Marxist in philosophy but a lot of things I never follow like the Maoists, you know? We were not involved in guerrilla streets. I was something like a Marxist anarchist."

"Every Saturday night all the girls in dresses and men with ties went to cocktail bars – but you are 16 with a molotov cocktail inside your coat to get an American car exploded!"

Politics have been a tangible presence in his life since before he was born. "My families were all refugees," he says. "My father from Istanbul on the emigration road. And my mother was German. My mother was jailed [when she came to France]. We had a lot of shit here because of bad things during the war."

And, right from the beginning, there was a certain pressure on him to succeed intellectually. "I come from a family with no study at all. The only intellectual part of the family was my grandfather – the father of my mother. In the house there was a kind of contract – my grandfather always dreamed that one of his five little children would have a real diploma in the best possible, big, important public school."

Pinhas more than delivered on their expectations. After studying anthropology, history and sociology, he read philosophy at The Sorbonne, after which he stayed on as faculty, teaching philosophy for a year. "At this time," he reminisces, "you have to figure that since the beginning of the century, philosophy was quite like a dream in France. You have Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard – that was my main teacher in philosophy – and people like Jacques Lacan."

Throughout all this, alongside his philosophical pursuits, he maintained a keen interest in science fiction. "When I was student, I was very poor and did not have money to buy books. So, in 1971, I joined a group of French students who were interested – very, very interested – in books in general but [particularly] in science fiction. I have been very interested, not in science fiction in general, but in a certain kind of political science fiction like Norman Spinrad, Frank Herbert and, of course, Philip K Dick."

Moreover, Pinhas became increasingly drawn to the ways in which philosophical thought and science fiction can overlap. "In France, at this time in the 70s, university was in boxes, you know? You didn't have a philosophy that goes seriously into books of sci-fi. But I was, not me alone, of course, a lot of students at this time were interested in this." Such an interest dovetailed with the radical theories of leading post-structuralist thinkers of the day. "Sociology like Jean Baudrillard's, philosophy with people like Lyotard were all in a real, real deep combination with these great science fiction writers," he explains. Pinhas added to the discourse with his own PhD, completed in 1974 – around the same time Heldon was getting going – with a dissertation entitled "Science Fiction, The Unconscious, And Other Things", in which he examined philosophical resonances in sci-fi books such as Frank Herbert's *Dune*.

One particular post-structuralist philosopher under whom Pinhas studied at the Sorbonne came to occupy a large role in his life – Gilles Deleuze. "I call him Gilles because we were very close, we saw each other one or two times a week. One time Gilles decided to be friends. I didn't decide anything! I was a 19 years old guy. From 1971 until 1987 we were very, very close."

So tight was the inter-generational friendship, in fact, that Deleuze (born 1925) even became an artistic collaborator. On Schizo's 1972 track "Le Voyageur", he reads a cut-up of a Friedrich Nietzsche text over a doomy guitar riff, pausing his commentary only to make room for a jazz-inflected waltz time break with a delirious keyboard solo. Thanks to Deleuze's sonorous Francophone narration, the piece resounds with a mysterious solemnity and depth – and was also included on *Électronique Guerilla* as part of the A side's title suite, dedicated to William Burroughs. Pinhas's solo album *Rhizosphere* was also dedicated to Deleuze and, after the philosopher's death in 1995, he incorporated his readings into several more tracks.

Despite all this, certain science fiction writers exerted the most tangible influence over Heldon's aesthetic. The group themselves takes their name from *The Iron Dream*, a satirical 1972 novel by American anarchist sci-fi author Spinrad, in which he posits an alternative reality in which Adolf Hitler, after a youthful period involved in "radical politics" emigrates to the US in 1919 to become a sci-fi writer. The alter-Hitler's thinly veiled pro-fascist novel *Lord Of The Swastika* takes place in the fictional High Republic of Heldon.

Perhaps an even bigger role in Pinhas's personal mythology is occupied by sci-fi author Philip K Dick – and particularly *Ubik*, his hallucinatory 1969 tale of psychic espionage and uncertain realities. "It made a real JAB in my head," Pinhas tells me by email, "and I think that it changed all my life perception (this mixed with some minimal LSD experiences… maybe six or seven experiences)."

Pinhas recounts how, in 1974, aged just 22, he visited Dick at home in Orange County, California, together with his wife Agneta Nilsson. "We spent 36 hours talking and had a very mystical time." What did they talk about? "We talked about politics and writing, of course!" he laughs.

I wonder if Pinhas considers the psychotropic-philosophical – and largely dystopian – sci-fi he read back in the day as having in some way predicted elements of the 21st century world in which we currently live. "For sure. The three books that build the dystopia we are living nowadays are certainly *Ubik*, [Dick's] *The Three Stigmata Of Palmer Eldritch* [which examines the use of hallucinogens for escapist purposes and, again, unreliable realities] and *The Iron Dream* from Spinrad." Moreover, Heldon's technology-obsessed album covers, populated by unsettling cyborgs and techno-hybrids, can be seen as offering prophecies about this modern world. "Yeah," he laughs, "that is obvious now, but not at the time. It's all the difference between analogue world and digital world. The digital world is very different."

At various points throughout our conversation, Pinhas closes his eyes and sinks into a silent reverie. Many last for several seconds, an almost uncomfortably long time, until a quiet clearing of my throat brings him back to the room. Emerging from one of these trances, he proclaims, unbidden: "There is a real connection between music and philosophy. I mean concepts like time, repetition, cycles, everything. A real connection between them, and if I want to have the small concepts that run through all the philosophy history, all the music history, they're all run by concepts like repetition, like smoking/non-smoking. I'm a non-smoker as you can see," he adds, mischievously waving his lit cigarette at me.

Later, by email, he attempts to clarify his thinking: "What interests me is the relationship between these four concepts: DIFFERENCE, REALITY, REPETITION and 'DURÉE' [duration]. It happens that these four concepts are the ones operating in music… from Terry Riley to Philip Glass… I mainly fell in love with Philip Glass and I had a big chance to talk with him many times."

It's certainly not hard to hear traces of American minimalism in Pinhas' work – in its simplicity, its economy, its investigations of, as he says, repetition and duration. Moreover, tracks like "Fluence (Continuum/Mobile/Disjonction Inclusive)" from Heldon's second album *Allez-Tèia* display the influence of Terry Riley in their overdubbing of mellifluous yet fleeting keyboard arpeggios.

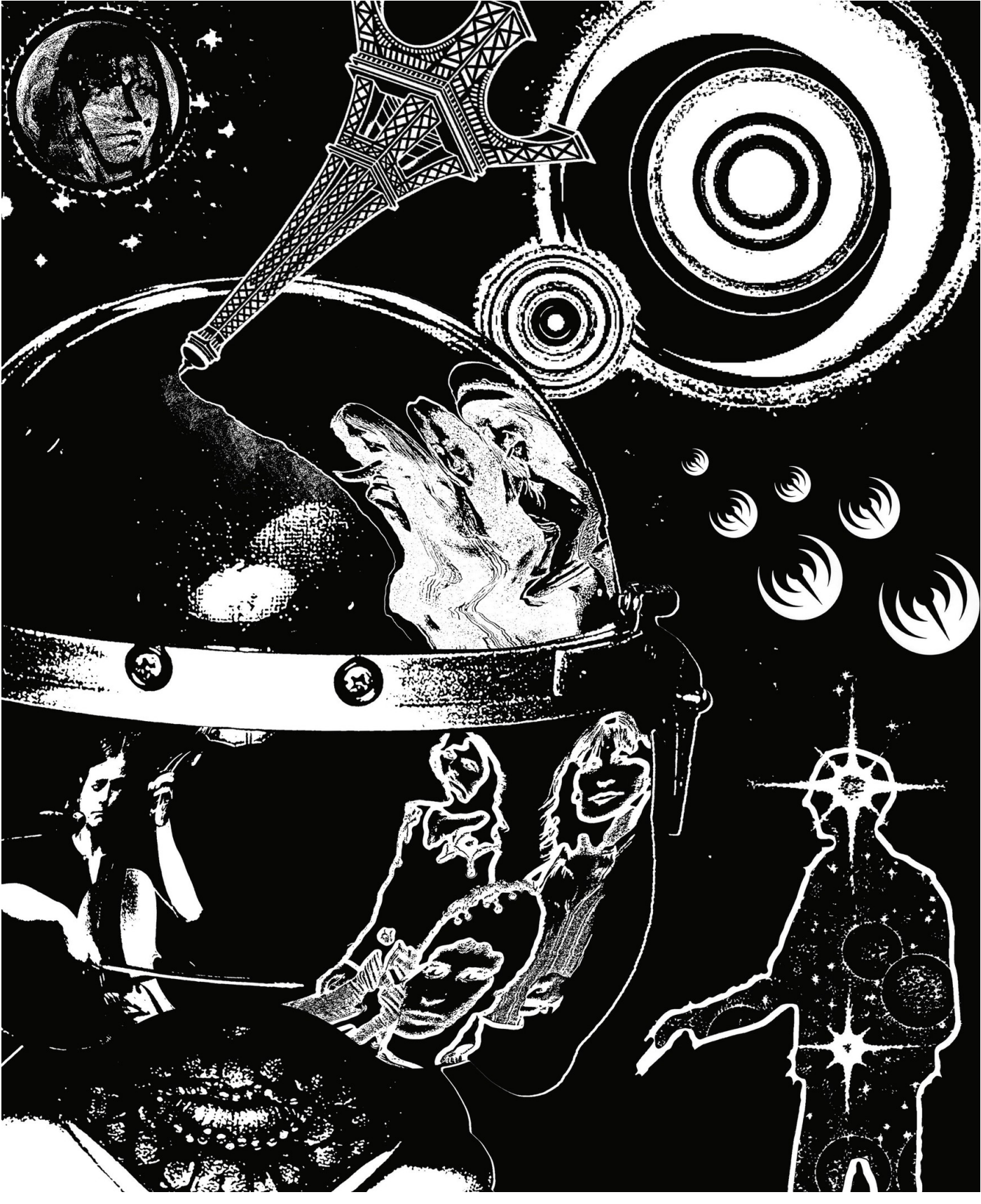
Yet, one artist similarly obsessed with repetition and delay has had a much more significant impact on Pinhas's musical thinking: Robert Fripp. "*In The Court Of The Crimson King* was a great moment in my life," he asserts, "but Fripp and Eno were the main influence. A big revolution happened when he started to play with Eno." Hearing Fripp and Eno's 1973 collaboration *(No Pussyfooting)* was one of the most formative experiences of his life. "It's something that I feel was specially done for me." He pauses, eyes closed for several seconds. "It's difficult to find good words for this very special creation." Certainly, the many stylistic connections between Fripp and Eno's work and Pinhas's are undeniable, going right back to the earliest days of Heldon: the notions of circularity and accumulation proposed by Eno's tape loops, and the Frippertronics guitar sound Fripp pioneered in these recordings – the fluid, almost backwards-sounding effect he produces from specific adjustments to attack and decay. Not for nothing is there a track on *Allez-Tèia* called "In The Wake Of King Fripp".

"He's a very old friend," Pinhas says of Fripp. "I met him for the first time in 1974. He calls me his brother!" With some pride, he recounts a memorable meeting that took place after Fripp played a concert in Paris in 1975: "I had the chance to present Deleuze to Fripp… like two Martians asking themselves plenty of questions about the other one."

It's easy to imagine Pinhas relishing this meeting of singular minds. He himself retains an air of the quintessentially absent-minded professor, someone still at home in academia, devoted to the life of the mind. Glancing at my shelves behind me, he notes: "So, we both have a lot of books and LPs. More and more, getting older, I have more and more books and less and less albums."

He's maintained a healthy interest in philosophy too. In 2001, he published a book (thus far untranslated from the French) entitled *The Tears Of Nietzsche: Deleuze And Music*, in which he examines music by the likes of Boulez, Kraftwerk, Lou Reed and The Sex Pistols in a Deleuzian vein. Looking back on his own career as a musician, he seems faintly bewildered by the whole experience. "When I started Heldon nothing was serious," he reflects. "Nothing was telling me that I will do it professionally, the music, for all my life. Heldon was a succession of philosophical stuff, political stuff, musical stuff that was very, very strong. It happened like this but by luck. There were no wishes, no plans. Mainly, I was a Hendrix fan. That was the more important thing that happened for me."

Sensing that our time is drawing to a close, I wrap up the conversation. "Now I will go and have a cigarette in the woods!" he exclaims with a grin. Blows me a kiss. And is gone. ☐ Richard Pinhas & Merzbow's *Coda* is released by Bam Balam



The Primer

Radical politics, anarchic psychedelia and visionary philosophies collide in the world of

French underground rock

through trailblazers such as Christian Vander's Magma, Richard Pinhas's Heldon and Gérard Hourbette's Art Zoyd. By **Keith Moliné**. Illustration by **Savage Pencil**

There's a passage in Eric Drott's *Music And The Elusive Revolution: Cultural Politics And Political Culture In France 1968–1981*, in which anarchist elder statesman of chanson Léo Ferré's "L'Été 68" is said to invoke an "eternal return of revolutionary esprit". Meditating wistfully on the events of May 1968 in which France found itself in the grip of mass insurrection, Ferré's song repurposes the famous anthem of the French Revolution "Ça Ira", situating the May uprisings in a revolutionary continuum stretching back 200 years. Drott implies that the notion of revolution is somehow hard-wired into French culture, maybe even the French psyche – that in France, revolutionary concepts are ingrained in the very conventions and institutions that revolutionary actions seek to overturn. It is this paradox that, in part at least, explains the particularly complex development of underground musical activity in France in the years following 1968.

It has become something of a truism that French rock music of the 1970s remains under-discussed in comparison not just with contemporaneous anglophone music but specifically the German music scene of the time. Thanks to the vivid work of writers such as David Stubbs in *Future Days: Krautrock And The Building Of Modern Germany*, the representation of krautrock as a direct response to and reaction against postwar conventions in German society has been established as an easily navigable version of events.

In the cultural fallout that followed the Nazi era, krautrock retooled countercultural American and British forms so they would serve as a critique both of German establishment culture, and also those US/UK forms themselves, which despite having initially inspired krautrock's development had come to be recognised as manifestations of a creeping form of cultural imperialism. Notwithstanding the radical otherness of many of its manifestations, krautrock was built on an assumption that rock music in a general sense was an inherently anti-establishment form.

But in France, the situation was trickier. The notion that rock music had worthwhile potential as an agent of social and political change was under constant interrogation. One reason was that the chanson tradition, with its focus on developed poetic language rather than the affective terrain of sound and rhythm, had a cultural legitimacy and an ability to deliver complex messages in a way that couldn't be matched by imported pop and rock – for a Francophone audience at least. The idea that the sound of rock itself could be a carrier of ideas only gradually began to gain traction. For audiences in the English-speaking world – and arguably in krautrock spheres also – the extremity and danger, the challenge and protest inherent in mainstream rock could be clearly discerned within its often formulaic outward form. The howling ghost of John Coltrane seemed to be present in a Clapton blues solo; the violence and chaos of the My Lai massacre was encoded into the grooves of *Beggars Banquet*. The pervasive myth of rock radicalism underpinning the international subculture lent it power and truth.

The position of radical ideology in intellectual and cultural life in France provides another explanation for rock's enfeebled role before May 68. Philosophers and polemicists like Louis Althusser, Jean-Paul Sartre and Guy Debord, as well as cultural lightning rods like Jean-Luc Godard and Pierre Boulez, maintained a curious dual position in French public life, both icons and iconoclasts, cheerleaders for anti-state action but ambassadors for the intellectual sophistication of the French establishment. Once again, the reductive sociopolitical messages gleaned from avowedly countercultural international rock seemed tame and platitudinous in comparison. The actions of May 68 can be read as a manifestation of this seriousness of intent: ideology getting real in a way that appeared to take the Western world by complete surprise.

While French commentators were suspicious of the idea that the recycled and commodified music of Anglo-American rock counterculture could carry any radical message, there was an acceptance that such potential could be found in avant garde jazz, which enjoyed a particularly high profile and commanded a broad audience – many reports suggest that it was one of the main soundtracks to les évenements. Certainly, much of the music that emerged thereafter – after the inevitable political clampdowns and climbdowns that characterised the period – referenced free music, drawing particularly heavily on the influence of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, who had decamped to Paris soon after the protests had died down. They took their place in a community of expatriate free music luminaries and members of a vibrant domestic jazz scene.

In France it was as if all political and cultural positions existed simultaneously in a flurry of manifestos, rhetoric and anti-establishment activity. It was a time of ideological accretion rather than clarification or refinement. Hence the scattered nature of the underground music of 70s France. It lacked a recognisable sense of historical development – towards punk, say – but was also musically founded on contradiction, incongruity and fragmentation. The continual playing out of ideological struggles in cultural form is one way of framing how the French music scene developed over subsequent decades – that "eternal return of revolutionary esprit" always evident, even as petrol bombs and paving stones gave way to guitars.

The new left and the FLIP

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Futura LP 1971
Komintern
Le Bal Du Rat Mort
Harvest LP 1971
Maajun
Vivre La Morte Du Vieux Monde
Pop Music LP 1971

In *Sounds French: Globalization, Cultural Communities And Pop Music In France 1958–1980*, Jonathyne Briggs identifies an emerging trend in the post-1968 musical landscape to "understand pop music's politics as an extension of existing forms of political action". The aim was to unify the cultural and political threads that had unravelled after the collapse of the demonstrations and strikes, and create new forms of music that would serve to unite disparate audience groupings around a single cause. To this end was founded the Front de la Libération Internationale de la Pop (FLIP), whose ideologically charged manifestos and pronouncements predate those of the Rock In Opposition movement by almost a decade. According to FLIP, pop music carried the potential to be "a subversive weapon, a vehicle of revolt for young people against an exploitative society of work, boredom, and death… a revolt against the old world, a subversive arm to change life and to transform the world here and now". The FLIP-affiliated groups wasted no time in producing albums which stand as striking embodiments of the insurrectionary spirit of the times (unfortunately, neither Dagon nor Fille Qui Mousse, though very active musically and politically, were able to get any of their music released until decades later).

Red Noise played concerts to the May 68 protestors; the group's Patrick Vian later claimed that their concerts would only come to an end when the cops arrived, and "Sarcelles C'est Avenir", the gripping 19 minute jam that forms the centrepiece to their sole album, certainly sounds like it would have raised the ire of les flics, with Vian's guitar a particularly feral component set against the avant

Red Noise, *Sarcelles - Lochères* (1971)

The Gong axis

Dashiell Hedayat
Obsolete
Shandar LP 1971
Gong
Camembert Electrique
BYG Actuel LP 1971
Continental Circus
Philips LP 1971

In 1967, expatriate Australian Daevid Allen, guitarist from the original Soft Machine, wound up in Paris after being refused re-entry to the UK when his visa expired. As a poet and proto-sound artist he quickly immersed himself in the local avant garde scene, finessing his trademark tape loop and glissando guitar techniques in solo performance, assisting electronic composer François Bayle at the ORTF studios, and hooking up with French musicians in early incarnations of what would become Gong. Allen's vivacious dilettantism, which leavened sophisticated techniques and notions with roughness and spontaneity, was perfect for the time and the place – his work could perhaps be seen as bringing some of the outsider spirit of art brut founder Jean Dubuffet into the developing French musical underground. He was drawn into the May 68 actions, identifying with the Situationist elements at play rather than the more rigorous theorising of any of the specific leftist groups involved.

Jonathyne Briggs posits the idea of there being two general schools of thought among the youth – the hyper-politicised gauchistes of the New Left, and a second group he dubs the Freak Left, instinctively suspicious of organised movements and who assumed cultural ascendancy as the state regained its grip on power and the immediate political goals of May 68 were abandoned. Despite their admiration for groups like Red Noise, Allen and his co-conspirators definitely fell into the latter camp. While Gong's reputation might rest more on their later work on the Virgin label, their early French releases have an urgency that feels as if it has carried straight through from their creators' experiences on the barricades. You'd never paint Gong as silly, stoned hippies after hearing *Obsolete* or *Camembert Electrique*; these albums bristle with raw, anti-establishment rancour.

Dashiell Hedayat was one of the many pseudonyms of writer Jack-Alain Léger. *Obsolete* finds his drug-drenched reveries and debauched confessions backed by Gong's ragged out-blues, pastoral Syd Barrett-style drifts and unmistakable glissando guitar trance-outs, best heard on the side-long "Cielo Drive/17" which switches back and forth between these modes. *Camembert Electrique* is a stone(d) classic of propulsive grooves and leering, sardonic sax – Christian Tritsch's bass and Didier Malherbe's reeds are front and centre throughout, while a link back to the Canterbury scene that birthed Soft Machine is present in the thrilling drum work of the great Pip Pyle. On later albums Gilli Smyth generally restricted herself to a textural role, weaving delirious

Gong, *Camembert Electrique* (1971)

jazz textural shadings and lopsided, awkward shifts of rhythm. The scatological collage and cut-ups of the remainder of the album reflect both the fragility of the institutions of the state and the fractured status of the militant opposition. Though gleeful and skittish, *Sarcelles – Lochères* is also an unsettling, savage and ultimately deeply pessimistic affair, a vision of a future France in which the entire nation is likened to a grisly, hopeless sink estate. The only other Red Noise release was a bizarre collaboration with actress/singer Marie-Blanche Vergne on a 1970 single "La Veuve Du Hibou", in which her impassive performance is periodically gatecrashed by the band in full freak-splatter force.

The formation of Komintern resulted from an ideological schism in Red Noise's ranks. In the classic style of that era, two of the more hardline Trotskyist members, keen to hone the polemical content of the work, found themselves at loggerheads with Vian, who felt no urge to have the music deal in political specifics beyond communicating a general hard left stance (a difference that replays the aforementioned debates on the ability of rock to carry radical messages efficiently). Curiously, Komintern's sole album *Le Bal Du Rat Mort* comes across as far more ambiguous in terms of polemic than the work of Red Noise. If the latter favoured disjunction, Komintern went for accumulation, in terms of style, tone and instrumentation. The brilliantly realised "Bal Pour Un Rat Vivant" suite, which comprises the first half of the album, quotes from revolutionary anthems like "Avanti Popolo", bending them into strange shapes as if viewed in a carnival mirror, and cutting them into scurrying rhythmic passages and dissonant chamber-rock constructions. For all its compendious content, it's as disciplined an album as *Sarcelles – Lochères* is untamed, perhaps reflecting the seriousness of intent that underpins its politics. But at the same time, it has a sardonic edge that feels as if it's directed not just towards the contradictions and injustices of modern capitalist conditions, but also in on itself, as if mocking its own absurd faith in culture to effect any kind of political change.

Also of interest is Maajun's *Vivre La Morte Du Vieux Monde*, released on the Pop Music label in 1971. It shares a similar aesthetic of deconstruction and piss-taking, even as it suggests more of a rapprochement with imported psych rock alongside its myriad jazz, folk and experimental manoeuvres.

Red Noise's Patrick Vian (centre) in Paris street protests, 1968

Claude Palmer courtesy Gilles Yepremian

threads of space whisper in between the guitars and synths, but she is a fierce lyrical presence here, critiquing the counterculture's marginalisation of women and staking her claim to a share of the spoils of the global post-revolutionary enlightenment that Allen's songs presaged. *Continental Circus,* recorded two months earlier for a film soundtrack, is another rough diamond worth hearing, particularly "What Do You Want", its early version of *Camembert*'s "Fohat Digs Holes In Space", one of the most fully realised of their glissando workouts.

For those craving a more primitive Dubuffet-damaged take on psych, the work – if it can be called work — of Mahogany Brain is an unsettling shambles, but exerts the same mysterious pull as the dazed freakouts of the original Amon Düül.

Catherine Ribeiro (right) and Alpes

New chanson

Brigitte Fontaine/Areski/Art Ensemble Of Chicago
Comme À La Radio
Saravah LP 1969
Catherine Ribeiro + Alpes
Paix
Philips LP 1972/Mexican Summer LP 2018
Colette Magny
Feu Et Rythme
Le Chant Du Monde LP 1971

Along with chanson, folk was accorded respect and importance as a legitimate form in comparison to the superficiality of domestic yé-yé and international pop and rock. In the hands of great originals like Fontaine and Ribeiro, the styles were thoroughly interrogated in the wake of the cultural upheavals of 1968, opening them up to new influences arriving from the international underground. *Comme À La Radio* is a beautifully unmoored meeting of chanson, poetry, North African instrumentation and The Art Ensemble Of Chicago in uncharacteristically languid mood. *Paix*, meanwhile, introduces psych elements into intense longform folk songs that combine furious political declaration with a deep sense of tragedy that recalls a kind of mutated, gothic fado – Ribeiro is of Portuguese background. In *The Wire* 417, Julian Cowley praised her work for its dialogues between "gut reactions and clear-sighted analysis, cathartic release and living conviction".

In refusing to stay within the space provided by established notions of genre, Fontaine and Ribeiro, fiercely confrontational artists both musically and ideologically, discovered new ways for the song to challenge and destabilise the cultural landscape.

Colette Magny was a more marginal figure in terms of pop – when she was discovered in the early 60s she was feted as France's answer to Ella Fitzgerald – but by 1966 she was already experimenting with spoken word and musique concrète. Radicalised by the Algerian war, she was an outspoken and active participant in the May 68 protests, and like Fontaine was drawn to avant garde jazz as a means to prise open the chanson tradition and evoke some of the militant fire of the times. On *Feu Et Rythme* it's her range of vocal techniques that astonishes most, suggesting the power and control of Patty Waters or even Meredith Monk, but somehow maintaining a thread back to the chanson form.

Zeuhl

Magma
Magma
Philips 2×LP 1970
Christian Vander
Tristan Et Iseult
Barclay LP 1974
Shub Niggurath
Les Morts Vont Vite
Musea LP 1986

Christian Vander may pour scorn on the soixante-huitards today, complaining in a 2015 *Wire* interview that they would "stop at nothing to get into gigs free, and then steal your baguette from the stage. I saw a lot of negative stuff. There was a lot of casual, idiotic violence." As for the modern legacy of les évenements, he's scarcely more forgiving: "Nothing's changed. These are the people who are often in government now. They're even worse than before…they've just taken up the baton."

Whether Vander likes it or not, however, the aftermath of May 68 provides context for the Kobaïan mythology he has spent a lifetime building and curating, preventing it from being limited to fantasy or science fiction, and instead allowing it to resonate allegorically with the world around it.

Vander was likened to literary nihilist Louis-Ferdinand Céline in the French press in 1970 for his many pronouncements on the decadent state of modern life. As recently as 2019 he insisted that "the Kobaïan concept was just a statement about how men can be mean, selfish and stupid". Who those men might be for Vander has been quite flexible. Academic Kevin Holm-Hudson considers the Kobaïan myth "the ultimate statement of 'outsider' identity within the late 1960s counterculture", a claim that needs careful qualification. If we take their anti-establishment position as a given, this outsider stance must then be viewed as an attempt to distance Magma from the factionalism and posturing of the radicals. Daevid Allen himself contrasted Gong's colour and anarchy with the discipline of Vander and his black-clad cohorts, claiming the exacting leader would hit them with a stick if they slipped up.

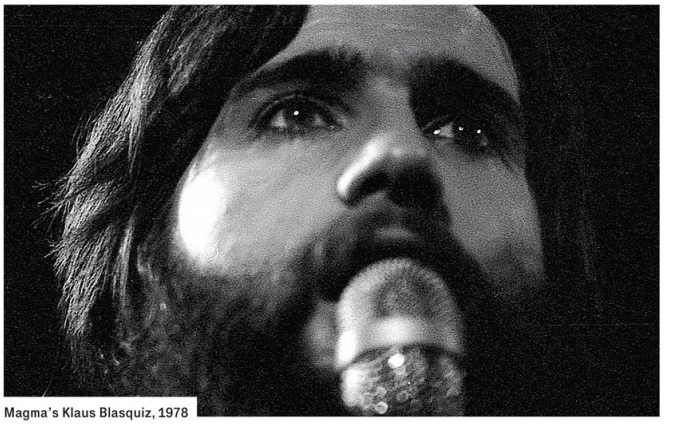
Musically as well as politically Magma pitted

Catherine Ribeiro + Alpes, *Paix* (1972)

Shub Niggurath, *Les Morts Vont Vite* (1986)

Courtesy Mexican Summer (Ribeiro)

Christian Vander at Fête de la Marseillaise, Marseille, 1975



Magma's Klaus Blasquiz, 1978

Jean Luc-Chevalier (left) and Vander, 1979

Patrick Thubaut

Magma, *Magma* (1970)

themselves against everyone on the French scene. As well as the jazz that was a universal influence dating back to the pre-68 landscape, the group draw on Motown and gospel on their 1970 debut – commercial, low art sources in the view of the countercultural elitists of the New Left. And in place of the skittishness of the Freaks, who sought to create fissures and instabilities in mainstream culture through absurdism and play, Magma offered stentorian chanting and the terrifyingly heightened demagoguery of Vander's screech-speeches, all delivered in the invented language of Kobaïan. While their self-titled debut (also known as *Kobaïa*) is tentative compared to the albums that followed, it sounds absolutely focused in comparison to the work released by their contemporaries. The then prevalent aesthetic of fracture and fragmentation is wholly absent from Magma's music, and improvisation is corralled in tightly structured compositional frameworks. Certain other underground groups distanced themselves from politics – Moving Gelatine Plates, for example, whose two early 70s albums are full of intricate Canterbury-inflected chamber rock. But while these groups, along with more mainstream acts like Triangle and Martin Circus, hoped to make an impact on the international stage by bypassing local concerns, Magma seemed to feel that even this was restricting, dedicating their project "to life, death and beyond".

Over the next few years, as the flash of 68 receded into memory and myth, Vander developed a musical language and world of his own. While 1973's monolithic *Mekanïk Destruktïw Kommandöh* is usually singled out as the key Magma album, a better example of the breadth of Vander's vision is the long composition (and eventually album) "Wurdah Itah" which due to an arcane set of circumstances was released as a solo Vander album, 1974's *Tristan Et Iseult*, the soundtrack to Yvan Lagrange's long forgotten arthouse film of the same name. With the release of his masterwork *Köhntarkösz* the same year, the musical blueprint dubbed zeuhl (celestial in Kobaïan) music was firmly established and has remained a key influence in leftfield rock ever since, both nationally and internationally. Initially, Magma offshoot outfits like Zao and Weidorje kept close to Vander's blueprint – the former to the heavy brass-adorned jazz rock of the early iteration, the latter to the heavier grandiloquence of the classic mid-70s version – but the durability and mutability of zeuhl revealed itself later with the space disco inflected Eskaton and the slow grind of the supremely cheerless Shub Niggurath, among many others.

Rock In Opposition

Art Zoyd 3
Art Zoyd 3
AZ Production LP 1976
Etron Fou Leloublan
Batelages
Gratte-Ciel LP 1976

The FLIP groups were stymied by their inability to engage large audiences – a perennial problem for leftist cultural workers. Without this larger audience, there could be no mobilisation of anti-state forces, and at the same time, success would signify a detachment from the protest community. There was also an ongoing suspicion that their music was in danger of being co-opted not just by a music industry aiming to commodify revolt for commercial gain, but also by specific left interest groups hoping to assume overall control of the direction anti-state protest.

In response, FLIP disbanded and then reassembled under a new banner, Front De Libération De La Rock-Music. Nevertheless, the idea that rock music could play a part in effecting political change, which had seemed tantalisingly achievable for a brief moment at the end of the 60s, had become an essentially theoretical position by the mid-70s. It is tempting to consider the possibility that the live performance circuit, centred around a nationwide locally funded network of Maisons Des Jeunes Et De La Culture, while sustaining the groups and allowing them to develop their careers, robbed the movement of its outlaw cachet.

Over the course of the first half of the 70s Art Zoyd moved from their rather undistinguished psych rock beginnings towards an astringent, drumless chamber rock take on modern classical music. 1980's *Génération Sans Futur* is perhaps their most accomplished album, but the brutal, brittle debut *Art Zoyd 3/Symphonie Pour Le Jour Où Brûleront Les Cités* is completely sui generis in its original 1976 version particularly (it was rerecorded in 1980 for reasons which must have seemed clear at the time). They went on to become a multimedia production house, specialising in epic film and theatre soundtracks until leader Gérard Hourbette's death in 2018. With serious music came serious rhetoric. "One must think of musical creation on the level of materialist critique, notably on the subject of those styles of popular music made solely of tricks and cliches," they proclaimed in one of these declarations of intent, going on to insist that their music represented a "total refusal" of those methods.

Despite the declamatory sweep of the language, the emphasis had changed from the demands for political action seen in the aftermath of May 68 to an insistence on difference and autonomy, a form of cultural survivalism in the face of capitalist intransigence (it could be argued that just as the leftist musicians had abandoned political action, the extreme agitators had in turn given up on cultural interventions and turned to darker strategies – the second half of the 1970s saw the violent activities of the RAF, Red Brigades and Action Directe reach their peak).

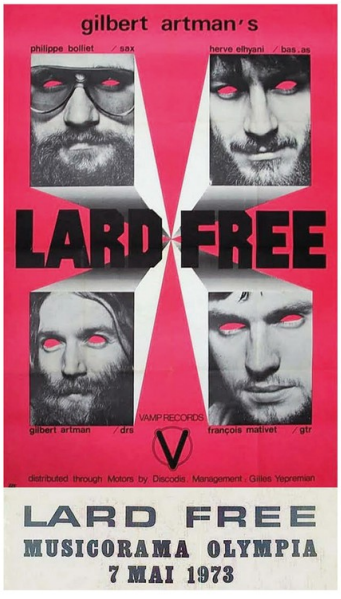
In 1978 Henry Cow's Chris Cutler was instrumental in setting up Rock In Opposition, an organisation dedicated to establishing an alternative musical network outside of the US/UK music industry hegemony. The RIO declaration of intent came with a side order of Marxian revolutionary rhetoric; one might be forgiven for wondering if the French contingent Art Zoyd and Etron Fou Leloublan were rolling their eyes and thinking "Oh no, not again".

Art Zoyd on French TV, early 1980s

Courtesy Cuneiform Records

Certainly, that's the attitude the latter seem to project on their debut *Batelages,* whose whimsical disruptions hark back to the Situationist-informed first wave of underground bands, but whose intent, as with Art Zoyd but with very different stylistic means, feels more about sniggering at the world from behind the curtains than confronting it. The album, though, is a dizzyingly inventive delight.

Of related interest are the fantastic 70s albums by Albert Marcœur, whose arrangements suggest something of the impish sense of incongruity of Van Dyke Parks, and who one imagines was only sidelined by RIO because he was not a live performer. Other purveyors of dissonant delights occupying RIO territory if not officially affiliated to it include Pataphonie, who released the obscure but fascinating *Le Matin Blanc* in 1978, and, much later, the overlooked Sotos who released two excellent collections around the turn of the millennium. By this point RIO had essentially become an alternative term for avant prog, a comfortable sub-genre that even gets its own regular festival. It could be argued that for the French groups, having started their careers within a leftist cultural big bang which almost immediately blasted them into space on separate trajectories, its ideological agenda was always doomed to be viewed as sentimental rather than rousing.



Lard Free gig poster (1973)

Bernard Szajner/Zed, *Some Deaths Take Forever* (1980)

The electro-rock interface

Lard Free
Lard Free
Cobra LP 1977
Heldon
Électronique Guerilla
Disjuncta LP 1974
Metal Urbain
Les Hommes Morts Sont Dangereux
Celluloid LP 1981
Bernard Szajner/Zed
Some Deaths Take Forever
Pathé LP 1980

On the subject of the revolutionary movement sliding from anti-state action into pure theory, Richard Pinhas has spent five decades invoking the philosophical writings of his friend and teacher Gilles Deleuze with his musical project Heldon. In a 2001 paper on Deleuze's ideas on popular music, Timothy S Murphy and Daniel W Smith praise Pinhas as "an example of an artist who creates an art-philosophy, a set of precepts, out of the materials of his/her art rather than one who attempts to imitate or represent established philosophical concepts in aesthetic terms". That is to say, Heldon's exploration of density, stasis, pulsation and duration seems to create a sense of constant shift and slippage, as if the solidity of the ground beneath our feet, though objectively undeniable, is being continually contested.

A pioneer of the synthesizer as a tool of both texture and rhythm, as well as a guitarist who knows how to make one note count, he has produced a huge body of work from a narrow set of precepts, digging ever deeper into his private methodology. Pinhas seems to place himself inside the musical process, interfacing with it as one of various components rather than assuming total control over its direction.

Gilbert Artman's Lard Free project had arrived at a similar point with their self-titled third album (often referred to as *Spirale Malax*), having worked with Pinhas on the previous release. In common with Heldon, there's enormous weight to the overall sound, almost suffocatingly so at times, as Artman's muscular drums churn beneath a whirlpool of synth arpeggios and drones.

The dystopian gravity of this music is its lasting legacy. Pinhas, in 1968 a student taking his place at the barricades, was radicalised by theoretical discourse that offered a means of explaining how he might engage with the world, but which inadvertently inspired him to withdraw into a neverending engagement with theory itself. This stasis, bordering on nihilism, was an aesthetic that informed French electronic music as the 70s gave way to the 80s and beyond. Metal Urbain's electro-punk thrived on a similar duality to that of Heldon and Lard Free, between a sense of speed and movement on the one hand and deadlock on the other. Bernard Szajner's *Some Deaths Take Forever* is perhaps the last word on electro-nihilism, a suite of songs themed around prisoners awaiting execution on Death Row, its futurism grimy and cloying, directly influencing the cold wave electro-pop movement of the 80s and anticipating the oppressive weight of industrial/post-rock band Ulan Bator, who emerged in the distinctly unrevolutionary 90s. □

Heldon at Davout Studios, Paris, 1978

Courtesy Richard Pinhas (Heldon); Gilles Yepremian (Lard Free)

Bernard Szajner, late 1970s

Metal Urbain, 1977

Courtesy Cortizona Records (Szajner)

Charts

Qawwali Massive Ecstasy 15

Hamza Akram Qawwal & Ghayoor Ahmed
"Mohse Bol Na Bol" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Ustad Bakshi Javed Salamat
"Mehfil Mein Baar Baar" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Sabri Brothers
"Man Kunto Maula" (EMI)
Muazzam Ali Khan
"Tanam Farsooda Jaan Para" (YouTube)
Tahir Qawwal & Baqir Abbas
"Jait" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Rizwan Muazzam Ali Khan
"Mast Qalandar Bolo" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Sher Ali Mehr Ali
"Hamare Khwaja" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Fanna-Fi-Allah
"Shahbaz Qalandar" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan
"Shahbaz Qalandar" (Oriental Star)
Ustad Ashiq Ali Sardar Ali Khan
"Har Atta Husne Azal Ki" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Ustad Abdul Rahim Faridi
"Es Ishq Di Reet Anokhi Eh" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Sher Miandad Khan
"Ya Mustafa Khair Ul Wara" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Abida Parveen
"Raag Bilawal In Tintaal" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Ustad Farid Ayaz & Abu Muhammad
"More Apne Hi Rang Main" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)
Ustad Fateh Ali Mubarak Ali Khan
"Nami Danam" (Fanna-Fi-Allah Sufi Qawwali)

Compiled by Iraklis Renieris (aka DJ Bwana), Athens. *Qawwali Massive Ecstasy* is broadcast on the first Tuesday of each month on movement.radio, and *Radio-Tangier* each Thursday on strummerradio.com

Truckin' 15

The Whims
"Truckin'" (No label)
Kenneth Higney
"No Heavy Trucking" (Kebrutney)
Pet Shop Boys
"The Truck Driver And His Mate" (Parlophone)
Dead Kennedys
"Police Truck" (Cherry Red)
Slugbug
"Truck Month (Gamma)" (No label)
Strapping Young Lad
"Satan's Ice Cream Truck" (Century Media)
John Cale
"Truck Parking Lot At Night" (Crépuscule France)
Sanguisugabogg
"Dragged By A Truck" (Century Media)
Zu + Eugene S Robinson
"Take-Away Truck" (Trost)
The Byrds
"Drug Store Truck Drivin' Man" (CBS)
Trumans Water
"To Milktruck" (Homestead)
Jandek
"Walmart Truck" (Corwood)
Guided By Voices
"Trash Truck" (Guided By Voices Inc)
T Rex
"Truck On (Tyke)" (EMI)
Deep Purple
"Space Truckin'" (Warner Bros)

Compiled by Chris Jones

DJ Castro 15

Mxmtoon
"Late Night" (Mxm T)
Rachael King
"Free Me From Me" (YouTube)
Doja Cat
"Love To Dream" (RCA)
The Manhattans
"Kiss And Say Goodbye" (TBS)
Amber Mark
"Love Is Stronger Than Pride" (Virgin)
Dennis Brown
"Life's Worth Living" (Morpheus)
Sugar Minott
"Just Can't Win My Soul" (Jabba Roots)
Cornell Campbell
"My Confession" (Camel)
Carl Henny
"Into My Life" (Money)
The Upsetters
"Dry Acid" (Pama)
Gang Related
"Vibration" (Dope Dragon)
Five Seven
"Zion" (PPJ)
Splash
"Babylon" (Juice)
D Base
"Dreaming" (D Base)
B-15 Project
"Girls Like Us" (Relentless)

Compiled by DJ Castro, *Heart N Soul Radio*, Soho Radio, sohoradiolondon.com/profile/heart-n-soul-radio

The Office Ambience

Celtic Frost
Danse Macabre (Noise/BMG)
Christeene
Midnite Fukk Train (Spaceflight)
The Dowling Poole
Refuse (369)
Fragility Of Sounds
Various (Ventil)
FaUSt featuring Keiji Haino
This Is The Right Path (Old Heaven Books)
Daulet Halek
Dombra Solo (Old Heaven Books)
Heith
X, wheel (PAN)
Irida Records: Hybrid Musics From Texas And Beyond 1979–1986
Various (Blank Forms)
Niko Karlsson
Its Own Phantom (Feeding Tube)
Kraus
Chronic Illness (Artsy)
MoE/BRUXA MARIA
Skinwalker (ConradSound)
Ishmael Reed
The Hands Of Grace (Reading Group)
Slumberland & Sainkho Namtchylak
Lightkeeper (Morphine)
M Takara & Carla Boregas
Grande Massa D'Agua (Hive Mind)
Teufelskeller
Teufelskeller (WV Sorcerer Productions)

Compiled from the playlists of *Wire* staff. To hear a stream of our Office Ambience, go to thewire.co.uk. We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, DJs, venues, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email a top 15 to charts@thewire.co.uk – the more unusual the better.

Senta Simond

"We can be Heldon, just for one day": Richard Pinhas (see page 34)

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82 Other Minds Festival, San Francisco, US
82 Skaņu Mežs: 20th Anniversary, Riga, Latvia
82 The Hearing Experience, London, UK
83 FutureStops, Toronto, Canada
83 Terry Day & Friends: Celebrating The Archives, London, UK
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85 Hannah Catherine Jones *OWED TO CHIRON (The Wounded Healer)*
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Soundcheck A–Z

New CDs, vinyl, downloads, streams etc

Blut Aus Nord
Disharmonium – Undreamable Abysses
Debemur Morti CD/DL/LP
Abduction
Black Blood
Candlelight CD/DL/LP
Caïnan Dawn
Lagu
Osmose CD/DL/LP
Lykotonon
Promethean Pathology
Profound Lore CD/DL/LP

Almost two decades ago Normandy's Blut Aus Nord officially became the black metal band that people got to know by the trail of blown minds in the wake of their fourth album. Even those allergic to hyperbole will admit that 2003's *The Work Which Transforms God* was ambitious, audacious and unlike anything yet offered by the band or the genre. Their pioneering reputation has since kept listeners guessing about where they'll go next.

Disharmonium – Undreamable Abysses is where they are now, and I don't think it too arrière garde to suggest it plays to their strengths. Especially since those strengths remain exploratory, explorable and inimitably their own. It's a sublime, howling chasm of night hag lysergia, heavy as gravity, but nimble too. That's demonstrated by the idiosyncratic percussion, the importance of which never struck me before. The pneumatic bass pedalling may seem routine, but its tectonic undercurrent, volleyed against agile, serpentine snare and cymbals create a vertiginous sonic space that's very Blut Aus Nord.

Also hailing from France are Caïnan Dawn whose fourth album *Lagu* showcases a stirring sound which, when it hits right, feels like scalding sea spray. Electronic interludes abound (the title track goes borderline synthpop) dialling up an esoteric ambience. But *Lagu* mostly wants to soar. Not in a histrionic enough way to be described as Maidenesque, for which I'm grateful, but in a way that recalls Dissection or other melodic death metal emissaries.

To some degree, that comparison applies to *Black Blood*, the latest by Derbyshire's Abduction. As an aside, both albums are on pre-eminent stables of the 1990s metal semi-underground – the former UK's Candlelight, the latter France's Osmose, offering some idea of how the respective labels currently roll. But Abduction's off-genre tangents are dustier and more psychedelic, with album highlight "Plutonian Gate" featuring some plaintive, flanging slide guitar precipitating what sounds like early Impaled Nazarene coming up on something stronger than expected.

The most curious curveball in this crop may be the four on the floor house juggernaut that opens *Promethean Pathology* by Colorado's Lykotonon. It's swiftly snatched up, rodent-like, in the preying talons of metal guitar shred, but it's a good shot across the bow, preparing the listener for later outbursts of quasi-industrial hard EBM and 'roid-rage gabber. This isn't totally unprecedented: Mysticum and Aborym come to mind as notables who have previously dragged black metal, if not onto the dancefloor, then at least within scowling distance. But when executed with some panache, as it is here, this kind of hybrid retains the power to surprise.

James Gormley

Yao Bobby & Simon Grab
WUM
LavaLava DL/2×LP

Yao Bobby is a rapper based in Togo, West Africa; Simon Grab is a producer from Switzerland. Their collaborations up to now have been intriguing if not mind blowing. To make this record they had to not only overcome the vast distance between them but also governmental clampdowns, travel restrictions and a plethora of lockdown related hurdles.

This is perhaps why *WUM* sounds so unleashed, so simultaneously smart and feral, and why its 20 tracks come at you with an energy that's unique, a noisy, sulphurous crush of distorted beats, bass and loops and wild, wicked raps.

Yao's lyrics are multilingual, cutting between his mother tongue Ewé, French and English, and they deal extensively with postcolonial rage and resistance. Grab's productions are a glitchy, riotous, bombed out soundscape of Afrobeat and Death Grips-style noise. This might imply a simple layered fusion of Yao and Grab's work – that's not the feeling you get here. Rather it's the simultaneity and the intrinsically linked nature of the mix that's crucial. At times Yao's syllables draw the music into flames (check the unhinged "Lekeo"); elsewhere it sounds like he's being pulled into the music's molten madness, as on the stunning title track. That back and forth between voice and sound, wherein a beat can become a mantra or a bar can become a backdrop, is why this music grabs you so intensely, why it feels so live and direct.

At times, as on the remarkable "Keep It", it's as if Grab is taking what Bobby is spitting live and ploughing it back into the mix until the music becomes a brain jangling hebephrenic transmission from a psyche at breaking point. Undercutting this organised confusion, though, is the bloody-minded grain of resistance and clarity in Bobby's voice. This is music that stands up to our modern madness while providing a gloriously righteous salve.

Neil Kulkarni

Tyondai Braxton
Telekinesis
New Amsterdam/Nonesuch CD/DL/LP
Stargaze
One
Transgressive CD/DL

Stargaze are an orchestral collective founded in Berlin in 2013 by conductor André de Ridder and ensemble managers Emanuel Florakis and Merle Scheske. They seem to have found a niche commissioning new classical works from indie musicians. In the past they have worked with Sufjan Stevens, Bon Iver and Anna Calvi among other recognisable names, doing their bit to facilitate the growing trend of indie musos branching out in classical directions, a trail laid by figures like Bryce Dessner (The National), Richard Reed Parry, Owen Pallett and others.

Commissioned and produced remotely, *One* is a lockdown project featuring a cast of five guest composers: Nik Colk Void (Factory Floor, Chris & Cosey), Tyondai Braxton, Greg Saunier (Deerhoof), Arone Dyer (Buke & Gase, Dronechoir) and Aart Strootman. The music captures something of the listlessness of pandemic times. There's an absence of liveliness and wit; the music barely reaches for registers beyond the housebound. It opens with Saunier's wilted and meandering "Metaphor", a piece that frustratingly crabs around a two octave range for seven minutes. Dyer's "Voicescream" is more lively with cascading harp, piano, flute and glockenspiel figures cut through by streaks of portamento strings, horn surges and ethereal vocal clusters.

Braxton's "Vacancy" is imaginative and episodic, offering a series of textural vignettes separated by rigid silence. The pulsing minimalism of Void's "Recollection Pulse #3" works itself into a froth of Bernard Herrmann-esque horror before deflating with a sigh. The album ends on a strong note with Strootman's "Descend", whose translucent membrane of harmonics and resonant bell tones thickens to a deep swell of earnest, unbending cello.

Tyondai Braxton's own *Telekinesis* is a symphonic work that sounds like a lost sci-fi film soundtrack. It has the clustered, hovering awe of György Ligeti's *Atmosphères* and the eerie arpeggiated angles of Herrmann soundtracks like *Vertigo* and *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. "Overshare" sets the scene with themes that suggest the strange, wide-eyed chaos of mind control. "Wavefolder" picks up the pace, juxtaposing jutting rhythms, sticky string and choral clusters against retro reverb electric guitar and volatile surges of brass and bass. "Floating Lake" plays comedy against alarm with curious synth bleeps and percussive fidgeting that swiftly escalates into a full-scale racket.

Final movement "Overgrowth" assembles the thematic elements into a final monstrosity as urgent timpani rhythms bring unmistakable cinematic action sequence energy. It's a hoot.

Leah Kardos

Burial
Streetlands
Hyperdub DL/12"
Ikonika
Bubble Up
Hyperdub DL
Kode9
Astro-Darien
Hyperdub DL/10"

Streetlands is Burial's second EP of the year following January's *Antidawn* and it continues in the same beatless, cinematic vein. It opens spookily with "Hospital Chapel" – an eight minute sound collage of crackle, tiny scraping noises and nocturnal sound effects juxtaposed against huge, curved sweeps of dusty ambience. "Streetlands" recycles the sample from 1990 thriller *Flatliners* that he used on 2012's "Loner" from the Kindred EP (*"There's something out there"*) which ushers in an immersive texture of sharp, howling winds and short, harried breaths, upon which an uncanny, digitally tightened backwards vocal burns through in bright neon. Final track "Exokind" jumps around like a fragmented dream, with arpeggiated synth figures and thick clouds of textured reverb dropping in and out like haunted radio transmissions. It's a seductive sequence of tracks which leaves plenty of space for the listener to engage their narrative imagination.

Fellow Hyperdub veteran Ikonika returns to the label with the five track *Bubble Up* EP on which she explores a more pop orientated aesthetic than usual and showcases her own vocals for the first time. Opening track "JSUK" is a propulsive, moreish, amapiano inspired confection with digital keyboard top lines over warmly throbbing synth bass layers and deep house rhythms. The title track weaves together huffy synths, hard syncopated drumbeats and soulful vocal hooks into a satisfyingly sleek club banger. All five tracks are excellent dancefloor workouts, from the fizzy electro soul futurism of "When You Look At Me", to the deep euphoric rush of "Energy".

Astro-Darien is a conceptual sonic fiction/audio essay by Hyperdub label founder Kode9 aka Steve Goodman, a 26 minute world building accompaniment to his fourth album *Escapology*, released earlier this year. Astro-Darien extends the album's narrative themes, concerning Scottish space colonisation after the

Molly Joyce
Perspective
New Amsterdam DL

Molly Joyce is a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania born composer, multi-instrumentalist and vocalist. In 2017 she released the *Lean Back And Release* EP for solo violin and electronics, followed in 2020 by her debut solo album *Breaking And Entering* for voice, toy organ and electronics. She studied at the Juilliard School of music, the Royal Conservatory in The Hague and is now doctoral researcher in composition and computer technologies at the University of Virginia. Recent commissions include New York's Carnegie Concert Hall, Bang On A Can Ensemble and Washington's National Gallery of Art.

Joyce has impaired movement of the left hand, the result of injuries sustained in a childhood car accident. Her instrument of choice is the Magnus toy organ, which gives her a sense of freedom, ability and inclusivity difficult to achieve with traditional Western instruments (she observes that the Magnus is "made for my form and my deform"). The organ has a three octave keyboard with six major/minor chord buttons on the left. Reminiscent in layout of the more complex Hammond S6, it has a raw, gritty texture at the low end and a sweet, grainy higher tonality.

On *Breaking And Entering*, Joyce's crystal clear vocal style betrayed her classical training, with its softening breathiness and hints of Kate Bush in the freedom with which she swoops and soars around the upper octaves, supported by the Magnus's droning textures and enriched by electronic treatments. Joyce recorded everything for this first album using a Shure SM58 microphone for her vocals and Sibelius digital audio workstation for MIDI processing and effects – with added production from engineer Michael Hammond.

Emerging as a major artist in music and multimedia, Joyce is also becoming a leading voice for disability awareness in the arts. On *Lean Back And Release* she began to explore issues of ableism in her personal relationship with music; she developed these ideas further on *Breaking And Entering* in which she questioned what it means when your body is broken and you suddenly enter a new way of life and identity. What physical and emotional transformations must take place to compensate for the lack of movement and sensation? Joyce's injured hand is very much part of her physical identity – it's visible in the forefront of photo material and integral to her musical identity – which is impacted by her need to navigate an industry that still doesn't take enough care to cater for everyone.

The complexities of navigating life as a person with any kind of disability are brought into perspective on Joyce's new album of that name. *Perspective* takes a very different approach to her previous work. Instead of collecting songs or music that highlight the quality of her voice and talent as a composer, it is a collaborative multimedia project in which 47 people are interviewed to build a collage of their insights regarding the meaning of 12 words, which also provide the track titles. They are "Access", "Care", "Control", "Weakness", "Strength", "Cure", "Interdependence", "Assumption", 'Resilience", "Isolation", "Connection" and "Darkness".

Joyce poses the question, "What does [this word] mean for you?" The answers are varied and compelling: *"Weakness? Gosh that's so loaded"*; *"Care? The most liberating tool I have at my disposal"*; *"Cure, I hate that word. It's a dangerous fantasy, it contradicts the term disability"*; *"To exist is resilience"*; *"Control is an illusion"*; *"Isolation: something that's always there"*.

For this recording Joyce uses her voice as a choral underscore to lead the spoken word through different moods. The considerable limitations of the Magnus are challenged with clever electronic processing through which she achieves a rich variety of textures and rhythms. Joyce uses her music to answer the questions intuitively. For example, an oscillating major/minor chord expresses "Cure" as fantasy, while a walking bass line accompanies increasingly frantic arpeggiated sequences, rising almost to a scream. A rasping, urgent two-tone siren and choral texture develop in "Care". In "Strength" vocal and organ textures gradually thicken to create persistent hummed chords from overlaid rhythmic pulses. We only hear short snatches of music between the excerpts of spoken text and I would have liked to hear more, for Joyce's music to develop for longer sections between words. But the intention here is to support the spoken contributions.

Perspective is a powerful ongoing project from an inspiring emerging composer who hopes "to at least attempt to bridge the gap between society and disability and really cherish the disabled experience" while the Magnus generates a rich, unique soundworld. The album is charged by an intense composer/instrument relationship which, Joyce says, "parallels my relationship to my body, seeking creativity in unexpected places". ☐

The latest project from US composer, multi-instrumentalist and vocalist **Molly Joyce** confronts the complexities of living with a disability. By **Jo Hutton**

Shervin Lainez

Magnus effect: Molly Joyce

dissolution of the United Kingdom. First shown in 2021 during a two week audiovisual exhibition at Corsica Studios in London, Goodman describes the work as "a fever dream of an AI geopolitics simulator".

The listening experience is tense in mood and dense with ideas. Blasts of sharply detailed sound design bridge the gap between our reality and Kode9's imagined one – alien gurgles and digital SFX contrast with horror strings, rusty hinges and industrial Foley; robot narration is spliced alongside sampled news broadcasts. A rich and engaging sci-fi narrative emerges, tethered to our current political crises and impending climate disaster, endorsing *"Escapology, not escapism"*.

Leah Kardos

Xhosa Cole

Ibeji

Stoney Lane CD/DL/2×LP

Released last summer, Birmingham based tenor saxophonist Xhosa Cole's debut album *K(no)w Them, K(no)w Us* revealed a young artist keen to connect to the roots of jazz. Performed by an acoustic quartet, with guest appearances by saxophonist Soweto Kinch and pianist Reuben James, it tackled old favourites from the Great American Songbook alongside tunes by Woody Shaw, Thelonious Monk, Lee Morgan and others – all approached with an abundantly clear love and reverence for the tradition. For his follow-up, he's moved even closer to the source, investigating the centrality of rhythm to music of the African diaspora.

Ibeji is titled after the West African Yoruba word for twins, here providing a loose conceptual framework for a suite of duets with seven leading percussionists of African descent, which touch down in diverse stylistic territories. A few tracks match Cole with drummers playing a full kit. "Andy's Shuffle" and "Native Tongues" both find him letting rip streams of loquacious invention in the vein of prime Sonny Rollins while New Yorker Jason Brown rolls and tumbles with a heavy swing feel. By contrast, on "Our Search For" Cole takes a more exploratory approach, interrogating extremities and angles while Mark Sanders uses beaters to generate rumbling freeform thunder from toms and cymbals. A few tracks reach back further, matching the sax with hand drums – as on the buoyant calypso of "Dance Of Ancestra" with Adriano Adewale. There's room to look forward too: "All Roads", featuring Cole's brother Azizi, augments a spry drum pattern with bass synth and effects to propose a very contemporary post-jazz anthem. Corey Mwamba plays a wild card, dispensing with the vibraphone and marimba he often plays to provide electronic roars, bleeps and tactile crunches, over which Cole effects a loose meander.

The music is interspersed with snippets of conversation with the percussionists. Ian Parmel reflects on the mystical qualities of drum as heart beat, Sanders observes that *"playing solo is a duo with yourself"* while Brown makes the bold claim that *"anything that involves improvisation at some point is jazz"*. I'm not sure how much these spoken elements will bear repeated listening but it's certainly a thought provoking project.

Daniel Spicer

Adrian Corker

Since It Turned Out Something Else

SN Variations CD/DL

Since It Turned Out Something Else is Adrian Corker's first full length solo album in nine years. Corker is a London based composer for film and TV and that gift for conveying mood and atmosphere is very much evident in his other work, this album included. The modus operandi here is concerned with explorations of acoustic spaces, and by extension architectural space. Stylistically the music navigates the netherworld between the acoustic and the electronic, and it is not so easy to discern if what you're hearing is either, or both.

On this album the cast of collaborators includes violinist Aisha Orazbayeva, The Ligeti Quartet, percussionists Tatsuhisa Yamamoto and George Barton, singer Josephine Stephenson, pianist Mark Knoop, and many other formidable musicians. In addition he has also solicited the aid of Chris Watson, who provides field recordings and facilitates intriguing experiments in which audio is respatialised. So an ensemble or solo performance recorded in one space is diffused in another acoustic space and rerecorded. From a living room to a ballroom, this folding and unfolding, or compartmentalisation and decompartmentalisation, that Corker elegantly indulges in is in some ways a form of chamber music. His work recalls the spectralist school of composition, and artists like Iannis Xenakis, Éliane Radigue and Max Eastley, even as it's nothing like any of them.

One thing to consider is the album's title. *Since it Turned Out Something Else* suggests that notions of process, intention and actuality are being addressed here. Conceptual subtext aside, it's simply a really enchanting listen, like gazing into a pool of water and observing reflections of reality shimmer, wobble and warp. The scrying game.

Richard Thomas

Dale Cornish

Traditional Music Of South London

The Death Of Rave DL/LP

Dale Cornish often toys with aesthetics that fit the broad category of deconstructed club music, but his methods and purposes certainly do not. For one, the Croydon musician never loses track of rave music's fundamental principles while stretching techno, house, bass music, dubstep and industrial far into nonidiomatic forms. More importantly, he is immune to the haute siren call of Deleuze and Guattari, coating his music with themes held closer to heart instead.

While *Traditional Music Of South London* could be framed as a conceptual work, the album's root ideas are tight and intimate – from Cornish's experiences of queer culture to mundane everyday anecdotes. This approach makes all the difference, as each sonically oppressive fragment is supported by a sliver of humour, while common electronic phrases get to live a new life. Cue the minimal techno of "My Geography" which coasts along pumping, grimy beats while Cornish narrates about plotting his own geography with a digitally mangled voice, equal parts serious and ironic.

But rather than a geography, the album feels like a psychoarcheology – an act of digging up histories with a mixture of nostalgia and satire. On "Foxhole" he slurs and hisses a gnarly metaphor about foxholes and gay lore against glitchy dark folk and sticky claps in a style reminiscent of John Balance on Coil's *Love's Secret Domain*, whose spirit and queer sensuality permeate the album.

Elsewhere, tracks like "Great Storm", "Hoist Crash Fort" and "L-Junc" boom with 808 rhythms, increasingly caustic pads/synths and the occasional flicker of ghostly voices, while "Norman Lewis" and "SCY BFR HNH" surprisingly grind down to bare-bones acoustic guitar crooners. And even though each cut seems inspired by a specific memory or event, Cornish is a jester. In the end, he provides just enough clues to make things bewilderingly confusing, planting a seed for future myths.

Antonio Poscic

Richie Culver

I Was Born By The Sea

REIF CD/DL/LP

A love-hate relationship with one's small-town birthplace is common; for anyone creative, confronting that ambivalence is practically the standard price of a ticket getting the hell out. So it seems with visual artist and musician Richie Culver and Withernsea, from where he fled for London as a teenager but has subsequently revisited, describing the town clinging to Yorkshire's coast beyond Hull as Lynchian and "beautifully forgotten".

Culver works across several media but his music finds common ground with the visceral minimalism of his recent monochrome text based paintings. As with his earlier 2022 release *Post Traumatic Fantasy*, a palette of degraded synth pads and staggering, pugilistic beats leaves ample space for spoken lyrics mixing stark self-criticism with humour as black as the paint. Raving nights fade to sickly grey days in "Nervous Energy", which paces dead end streets to an insomniac loop of brash strings and incoherent vocal stutters. "Daytime TV" sinks into the sofa, motivation eroding faster than the coastline: *"Too many ideas/Too much time to do them"*. Elsewhere, the ghosts of Culver's three year lost weekend in Berlin's techno clubs resurface in "It's Hard To Get To Know You", vainly headbutting a wall of alienation built from the title sampled into abrasive, gritty blocks.

Occasionally, the vistas of slaughterhouses and mobility scooter repair shops veer perilously close to a broadsheet journalist's gleeful dispatches from Broken Britain. But "Pigeon Flesh" pivots on a pavement turd, from *"Picture a stray dog manically tearing into the flesh of a dead pigeon on the street"* to sardonic self-actualisation: *"At this point in your life you are exactly where you are supposed to be"*. Stasis yields to escape velocity in the title track, where memories of mundane isolation – *"Lighthouses flashing/Oil rigs sparkle in the distance/It was normal/I knew I had to get away/So I did"* – herald undulating grainy waves, pushing away and then drawing back.

Abi Bliss

Richard Dawson

The Ruby Cord

Weird World CD/DL/2×LP

The Ruby Cord concludes a trilogy of albums that the sui generis singer, songwriter and guitarist Richard Dawson began in 2017 with *Peasant*. That album was set in the Anglo-Saxon region of Bryneich between 400–600 CE; Dawson leapt into the present for the follow-up *2020*; now *The Ruby Cord* explores a future where life is largely virtual, a dystopia imagined in video games.

The centrepiece of the new record – made with violinist Angharad Davies, harpist Rhodri Davies and drummer Andrew Cheetham – is a 41 minute 'single' called "The Hermit", an intentionally bloated storytelling epic marked by florid language that evokes Old English more than virtual reality. It opens with a meandering 11 minute introduction, as Dawson and his bandmates casually improvise on the simple chord structure. The world his new songs evoke feels barren and scorched. In "Thicker Than Water" he sings, *"It's been days now and I haven't seen a single living creature besides a pair of sparring magpies"*.

Indeed, all of the songs dwell in a weird flux between the real world and fantasy, reflecting our current upside-down existence where truth is endlessly questioned. It's hard to know exactly what he's singing about much of the time, but Dawson's ardour for the sound of language is irresistible. *"Out of the yawning dene/And over a gorsey brow vanishes/Her black horseshoe rump and tattered tail/Into a gossamer vale"*, he croons at one point in "The Hermit", which cycles through endless verses, solos and sonic plateaus. "The Fool" is a love song at the edge of history in which he reminds us that *"Love is older than the sun"*, as are its difficulties.

Elsewhere he imagines himself as a horse galloping past abandoned cities in "Horse and Rider". *The Ruby Cord* is Dawson's most accessible album yet, but as elaborate as his futuristic visions may be, they remind us of the mess we're all in the middle of right now.

Peter Margasak

Kaja Draksler & Susana Santos Silva
Grow
Intakt CD/DL

Susana Santos Silva & Alexandra Nilsson
Radio Two
Superpang CD/DL

Trumpeter Susana Santos Silva, a native of Portugal now settled in Stockholm, has always revealed a strong aesthetic curiosity well beyond her deep jazz roots. Over time she's increasingly expanded her practice not only within jazz – whether playing in a big band in her native Porto or working regularly in Anthony Braxton's Diamond Curtain Wall Trio – but well outside of it. Earlier this year she dropped *All The Birds And A Telephone Ringing*, a bracing solo record built heavily around field recordings, where the trumpet is one of several tools, but never the focal point. Two new duo albums offer deft new elaborations on her improv practice.

Grow is her second collaboration with the Slovenian pianist Kaja Draksler, another equally restless jazz-bred player. The sounds they conjure veer more toward abstraction than on their previous album, with a restless shuffle of changing techniques and timbres. On "Moonrise" Draksler complements a rattling din of a prepared piano string with spare, cascading right-handed flurries, while Silva unleashes an extended improvisation slaloming between lyric flow and piercing blurts, and then the pianist abruptly toggles to an angular descending pattern – as if we're watching a film loop of someone walking down a few stairs – which inspires a more forceful response of forlorn trumpet melody.

Each of the four extended pieces operates similarly, with one or other of the musicians quietly leapfrogging into some new terrain. Silva complements her full-bodied tone with nuanced unpitched breaths, puckered phrases and striated vocalisations, while Draksler adds texture with electronically sustained tones and simulated microtones in addition to her clanky preparations. But the real magic is the intuition and support on display. It doesn't feel hyperbolic to say they could take this music anywhere.

Silva carves out a much more particular soundworld on *Radio Two*, a collaboration with Swedish composer and electronic musician Alexandra Nilsson. Columns of air sliced and diced, exploded, smeared and more in a visceral back and forth that builds upon Silva's potent arsenal of extended techniques. "Carnaval In Svalbard" is built from percussive pops formed through meticulous control of breath and embouchure – enhanced and thickened by Nilsson's electronic manipulations, the piece feels like a relentless massage of sonic sizzling, with every pop and gurgle shifting depth, tempo, density and attack.

The trumpet's tone is audible on "Messier 86" but it's rapidly stretched, fractalised and buzzed, even as Silva fights through the electronic distortions. It's a marvellous two-way interaction, with Silva feeding organic tones into Nilsson's electronics, which push the trumpeter to dig in deeper.

Peter Margasak

Earth Room
Earth Room
Related States DL/LP

The name of this Brooklyn based trio – guitarist Ezra Feinberg, woodwinds/electronics player Robbie Lee, drummer/keyboardist John Thayer – links with a rock 'n' roll band that played high school gyms around the greater New York area nearly 60 years ago. In 1964 Lou Reed convened The Primitives in the hope of fomenting a dance craze with a single named "The Ostrich". By chance, he recruited a crew of art nerds — John Cale, Tony Conrad and Walter De Maria. The latter soon lost interest in lugging a drum kit around in order to play the same songs over and over, and quit rock 'n' roll to commit himself to sculpture. Among his works is *The New York Earth Room*, an installation of 200 cubic metres of dirt that has occupied a NYC loft space since 1977.

Earth Room first convened in early 2019 when Feinberg recruited the trio to join him for a one-off gig at a Bushwick club that invited listeners to recline on beanbags spread out on the dancefloor. Their improvised set initiated a year of private recording. When New York locked down in 2020, they transitioned to editing the resulting freeform jams, motorik grooves and ambient expanses into this LP's six instrumentals. The trio favour sounds that bear weight, but which, like loam beneath your feet, give a bit. Thayer deploys his bass drum sparsely at the onset of "Within The Field", letting each thump sink into a soundscape of elastic synthesizer tones. That opening morphs into an arpeggiating groove that would fit right in on Kraftwerk's *Autobahn*, which is bisected by a synth and flute interlude that exudes a distinctly lunar vibe.

While the trio's sound is sometimes referential, it's also played with a winning combination of proficiency and creative rearrangement, resulting in a sound suited to accompanying a breadth of couch-bound pursuits.

Bill Meyer

Jimmy Edgar
Liquids Heaven
Innovative Leisure CD/DL/LP

Detroit conceptualist Jimmy Edgar's latest release is an eclectic mix of of hyperpop, avant trap, future R&B and more. The tracks are short and compact, most of them clocking in at around two and a half minutes, and showcase a diverse cast of underground rap and vocal talent.

What might sound scattershot and underdeveloped at first soon reveals complexity and sophistication over repeated listens. Edgar's overarching aesthetic becomes visible as the holographic sugar-dusted tropes of hyperpop barely mask its messy, pulsating heart. Lift the digital gauze to touch a weird reality, all rude and rubbery. The album opens with the appealingly frosty "Euphoria", a wistful vocal drenched in hazy synths. The crackling crunk of "Everybody" (featuring 10K.Caash and Zelooperz) feels infested with digital grit, rippling across the binaural field like roaches scuttling across your brain. Edgar's production slowly bares its fangs on "Dreams 1000000", where Milk's childlike vocal begins safely couched in dreamy dry ice ambience, only to be diced up by sharp-edged noise as the track progresses.

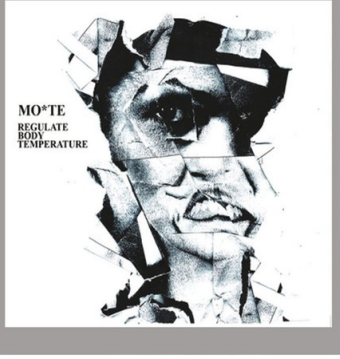
The instrumental tracks are also enjoyable, especially the crooked groove of "Slip N Slide" which seamlessly transitions into the stupidly catchy "Bite That 2", featuring a charismatic performance from Atlanta based rapper Trinidad James. The clattering stream of electronic noise in "Sideroom" sounds like getting the shit kicked out of you in the Metaverse while wearing a full body haptic suit. Other standout moments include the maniacal sexual cooing of Spanish DJ and producer Virgen María in "Bunny Lava", and the cutely demonic trap metal of "Static", featuring a scene-stealing vocal from Banshee (aka TikTok-famous vocalist Rachel Knight).

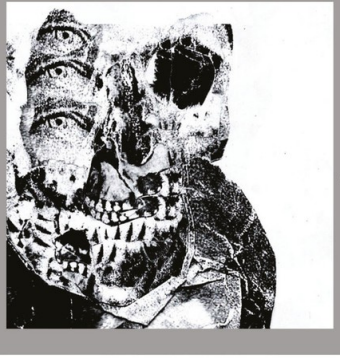
The closing euphoric ballad "Never Leave" (featuring Milk) circles around an ascending progression, teasing an emotional climax that never arrives.

Leah Kardos

Brunhild Ferrari & Christoph Heemann
Stürmische Ruhe
Black Truffle DL/LP

In 1957, Frenchman Luc Ferrari, a pioneering figure in musique concrête, field recording and instrumental composition, made the acquaintance of composer Wolfgang Meyer-Tormin. In short order, Ferrari enlisted his German counterpart's family and possessions – in particular, two tape recorders – to participate in some recording adventures. From then until his death in 2005, Brunhild Meyer Ferrari worked alongside Luc, participating in both the collection and assembly of sounds.




BLACK LEATHER JESUS
"SUPER 9½" cd
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Since his passing, she's presented several of her own concrete works. She made *Stürmische Ruhe*, her second collaborative LP for Oren Ambarchi's Black Truffle label, with Christoph Heemann (HNAS/Mirror/In Camera) who is, like her, a native of Aachen, Germany. Heemann's contributions are mainly electronic sounds, which Ferrari edits into some recordings she had made one stormy day at a disused factory.

The album opens with the heavy clunk of a door. The sonorities of portals in action have been a part of musique concrète since Pierre Henry's *Variations For A Door And A Sigh*, but one of the Ferraris' contributions to the field was a willingness to let sounds retain a relationship to their function, and so it is here. The door appears repeatedly, signalling changes in content and volume throughout the 29 minute piece. The wind's voice is a recurring presence throughout, building from a distant whistle lurking within a cavernous room tone to a gale force howl.

The first half of the album title, which translates into English as *Stormy Calm*, is hardly a mystery. But stillness co-exists with the ruckus, deriving both from the moderating influence of Heemann's long synthetic tones, and the evident distance between Ferrari's microphone and the events she recorded. The work preserves the experience of patient listening, permitting the audience to sit with her while she continues a life of collecting, witnessing and sharing sound.

Bill Meyer

Fire-Toolz
I Will Not Use The Body's Eyes Today
Bandcamp CD/DL/MC

Angel Marcloid has been sharpening an aesthetic of hyperreal grind since her 2015 debut *Even The Files Won't Touch You*. Many of the records which followed have been released via Hausu Mountain, a logical home for her uncanny muzak metal melange. While *I Will Not Use The Body's Eyes Today* is self-released, it sits comfortably in the foothills of the Chicago label – a landscape saturated in vivid colours and built on impossible angles.

These pieces continue to evoke a kind of techno-futurist utopia – titles such as "Sophrosyne In The Mirror Of Simple Souls" are matched with easy jazz textures above ecstatic drone. Where Marcloid omits vocals, such as on the elevator music glitch of "Air For Breakfast – She Is Safe & So Am I", this weirdness fizzes on the periphery rather than up close, subtle twinges hidden within Weather Channel chord changes and laid back electronics.

However, when these textures are paired with growling vocals, that peripheral weirdness is magnified into full horror – "Soda Lake With Game Genie" binds optimistic daytime TV synth and MOR saxophone with bursts of vaporous screech, while "Vedic Software~Wet Interfacing" drops similarly aggressive vocals into a kind of discombobulated hold music, beatific textures warping and bending in the heat.

I Will Not Use The Body's Eyes Today is Marcloid's most effective iteration of this uncanny mixture. Or rather, the most efficient – where previous releases take their time to explore this maximalist terrain, these pieces race straight to their destination with a clean-edged Technicolor aggression.

Spenser Tomson

Carla dal Forno
Come Around
Kallista CD/DL/LP

Carla dal Forno's music is essentially autumnal. The fact that all of her albums to date – 2016's *You Know What It's Like*, 2019's *Look Up Sharp* and now *Come Around* – have been released during the "season of the soul", as Virginia Woolf once described it, only emphasises this. The new collection even includes a piece titled "Autumn", featuring melancholic piano, violin and synths that swirl like rustling leaves.

Come Around may have the lightness and warmth of late summer, but the record is still based around the post-punk basslines and minimal synths that charaterised her earlier work for the Blackest Ever Black label. These songs were written after Carla Dal Forno – whose vocal delivery has been compared to Broadcast's Trish Keenan – settled in the bushlands of Castlemaine, Central Victoria, when she moved back to Australia after living in Berlin and London.

Carrying a sense of blithe adventure, the title track evokes an intimate atmosphere. Indeed, it almost sounds like a dubbed and slowed down version of 1970s-era Beach Boys with its dreamy, laidback guitar and analogue drum machine. "Mind You're On" is a bona fide pop song, a mid-tempo introverted hit with a hypnotic melody and finger snaps woven into its fabric. "Slumber" is a hymn of procrastination – performed in a duet with songwriter Thomas Bush, it'll sooth everyone whose afternoon power nap extends to late evening.

Come Around sees Carla dal Forno's songwriting taking new shapes and routes, allowing her to pour her crate-digging folk knowledge (showcased monthly in her NTS show) into these open and confident songs.

Miloš Hroch

Frances Pylons
Flies Pass Through The Lions Eye
Bandcamp DL

The members of weird folk outfit Frances Pylons hail from Bristol, where they haunt the healthy local avant folk circuit individually and as a unit. Their first album since 2019's *Haemorrhaging Light*, *Flies Pass Through The Lions Eye* imparts an idea of what the legendary 1970s folk rock band Comus might sound like if they were formed today.

Frances Pylons have something to add, however – most notably the dual core of CF Sherratt's earth-shattering bass vocal and the musical saw playing of Kieran Haynes. Throughout "The Putrid Isle", Sherratt's lugubrious vocal leaves no doubt as to the weight that he carries. All band members ululate in quick succession, demonstrating conviction and a capacity for the dramatic. The mantle they take on is that of medieval street theatre, sharing their laments with each village they pass.

The epic undertaking of "The Serpentine" provides the album's emotional climax, with a steadily building atmosphere amid the curious repetition of the mantra *"Snakeskin open wide, reveal the meat inside"*. Closer "Potency" is the most obviously narrative piece, with Sherratt taking on the role of Percy Adam Lovell. *"At work on the ship canal"* , he feels the weighty heritage of all the soil he toils away at, day in, day out.

Musical saw and fiddle solos abound, balancing whimsy with grim realism. Legacy, fact and fiction meet in the narratives of these songs – which come across as folktales from this world, even as they offer insights into another place, another time.

Rosie Esther Solomon

Maxine Funke
Pieces Of Driftwood
Disciples DL/LP

Flying Nun isn't the label it once was, and the halcyon days of Bruce Russell's pioneering Dunedin imprint Xpressway are a distant memory. But New Zealand's freak scene hasn't completely given up the ghost, and it finds a modern day emissary in Maxine Funke. Active since 2008, Funke has been prolific if somewhat low key, playing alongside Alastair Galbraith and trickling music into the world through a number of international labels. Not exactly a follow-up to last year's *Seance*, *Pieces Of Driftwood* instead collects lost singles, compilation tracks and lathe cuts along with some new fragments of music to create something that's not quite a career overview nor a new work.

Funke isn't a difficult sell. Broadly, her music is rooted in a 1970s singer-songwriter mode, centred around gentle, spry fingerpicking and a softly sung vocal that brings to mind Sibylle Baier. Songs like "Eternity" and "Nicest Thing" dwell on the minutia of relationships and the familiar scenery of domestic life. *"I just called to say/The zucchini in the cake was the nicest thing"*, she sings sweetly on the latter.

But that's just the surface. Much of what feels distinctive in Funke's music takes place somewhere just beneath. Scratch the girlish romance of "First In Spring" and you find a cold lament to loneliness that aches with pathos. Songs are demarcated by brief, strange interludes, stuttering drum machines or sheets of mangled guitar. And intrusions of tape hiss or environmental recordings contribute to her music's somewhat incorporeal quality. Listening to "Blyton Rock" you get the sense it might suddenly fold in on itself, or be carried off on a breeze.

The gentleness of *Pieces Of Driftwood* is beguiling. But the closer you get to these songs, the more palpable their mystery. There's a sense that their softness is designed not just to charm, but to occlude or conceal, a collection of whispered secrets too intimate or too raw for the world.

Louis Pattison

Goat
Oh Death
Rocket CD/DL/LP

Despite Goat's propensity towards self-mythologising and extravagant, culturally questionable public personas, anonymity never seemed just a marketing stunt for this (supposedly) Swedish group. Rather, their mystery provided them with the freedom needed to exalt their core 1960s and 70s psych funk above familiar currents with elements pilfered from folk traditions across the globe.

Venturing a bit too far out on 2016's *Requiem*, Goat ended up with a couple of solid rock songs surrounded by loose and unmemorable avant folk. *Oh Death* snaps them back on track right from the opening, where drips saturated with fuzz and wah on the sizzling "Soon You Die" are flung forward by a swirling guitar solo. Meanwhile, the group's vocalist becomes a proper mistress of ceremonies. When she sings, *"Soon you die, but you still have got time to party"*, she sounds like a hippy motivational speaker ranting about positive forces. These traces of Sun Ra inspired cosmic philosophy resurface throughout the album, without a hint of ironic distance.

"Chukua Pesa" looks towards Africa with its intoxicating hand drum polyrhythms and Osibisa tinged psychedelia. "Under No Nation" turns up the funk and Anatolian rock, topping it all off with a jazzy, saxophone dominated freakout. But the album's most intriguing pieces emerge when Goat draw on new influences. The jangling pop banger "Do The Dance" is reminiscent of The Bangles' "Walk Like An Egyptian", while "Goatmilk" and "Blow The Horns" indulge in Ethio-jazz, complete with flutes, organs, vocal harmonies and a horn section worthy of Gétatchèw Mèkurya and Mulatu Astatke. The chiming piano and guitar licks of the closing "Passes Like Clouds" suggest that Goat have finally rediscovered their true selves.

Antonio Poscic

Gotho
Mindbowling
Controcanti Produzioni DL

Polyphia
Remember That You Will Die
Rise CD/DL/LP/MC

Italian duo Gotho have been described as progressive or math rock but their debut

Reality bites: Mali Obomsawin

Mali Obomsawin
Sweet Tooth
Out of Your Head CD/DL/LP

The Harrowing of Hell is the Christian theological notion that during the time between the crucifixion and the resurrection, Jesus descended into Hell in order to liberate the souls held captive there. This religious doctrine is given intriguing new contours on "Wawasint8da", a single released in advance of Mali Obomsawin's compositional suite *Sweet Tooth*.

"Wawasint8da" is based on a 17th century Jesuit Harrowing of Hell hymn that was translated into the Wabanaki language by priests as part of a programme of colonialism and cultural indoctrination which also deemed Indigenous spiritual practices demonic. In Obomsawin's rendition, the artist's own voice performs the role of liberator, transporting the melody across a martial drum beat supported by sombre horns. Over time, this militaristic structure begins to fall apart, opening up spaces for wild instrumental flourishes to cut through the hymn like native flora bursting through cracks in the pavement.

The companion piece to "Wawasint8da" is "Pedegwajois". This track opens with a field recording of Wabanaki storyteller Théophile Panadis (1889–1966) reciting a narrative that has been handed down across generations. Obomsawin discovered this recording in the archives at Dartmouth College while they were studying jazz with Taylor Ho Bynum, who co-produced *Sweet Tooth* and plays cornet and flugelhorn on the album.

There is a striking parallel between the idea of souls being trapped in a prison-like Hell and the locking up of sacred Indigenous artefacts in the archives of white institutions – a parallel which reflects the violent, dominating impulses that drive the ongoing colonial project. The emancipatory spirit that pervades Obomsawin's music is deeply engaged in the work of decolonising culture by liberating ancestral knowledge from oppressive structures.

Like Théophile Panadis, Obomsawin has roots on the Odanak First Nations Reserve in Quebec, though the ancestral territory of the Wabanaki peoples also covers the areas known to settlers as New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Maine, where Obomsawin was born. The bassist, vocalist and songwriter first rose to prominence as a member of the indie folk band Lula Wiles, who issued their self-released debut in 2016, followed by a pair of acclaimed releases on the Smithsonian Folkways label. Inspired by the political conscience of artists like Buffy Sainte-Marie, Obomsawin tried to use the music of Lula Wiles as a platform for their activism, but eventually grew exhausted with the overwhelmingly white gaze of indie folk audiences. The transition to jazz is a natural and fluid choice which places Obomsawin in an illustrious lineage of groundbreaking Indigenous jazz musicians from Mildred Bailey to Don Cherry.

On *Sweet Tooth*, Obomsawin adeptly leads a sextet of seasoned musicians including Savannah Harris (drums, vocals), Miriam Elhajli (guitars, vocals), Allison Burik (bass clarinet, saxophone, vocals) and Noah Campbell (saxophones) in addition to Bynum. The album consists of three movements, each divided into two tracks. The first movement opens with "Odana" – a traditional ballad which Obomsawin describes as "the story of my people and why we survived". Here, Obomsawin's voice is simultaneously strong and vulnerable; solemn and celebratory.

On the original composition "Lineage" the focus shifts onto the expressiveness of the instruments. "Wawasint8da" and "Pedegwajois" comprise the second movement. The third movement spans the winding paths of "Fractions" and the cathartic "Blood Quantum (Nəwewəčəskawikɑpáwihtawɑ)". The latter incorporates a chant written in the Penobscot language which honours the crucial role that Indigenous women play in the survival of their communities.

Even when the tightness of the arrangements makes it clear that the music is composed, there is a looseness to the playing that moves with a pulsing, living energy. By stitching archival recordings and traditional compositions into new compositions incorporating many instruments and languages, Obomsawin extends the history of their ancestors into a vital and resonant present.

Emily Pothast

resists easy categorisation. The drop-tuned metal riffing at the start of "Peste Bucolica" isn't produced by guitar, but Fabio Cuomo's monstrous fuzz synth and what sound like bass pedal drones.

Drummer Andrea Peracchia then flips the beat inside out, which feels like the aural equivalent of tripping over a paving slab, all punctuated by string synth stabs and 1970s-style organ sounds. The fact that just two musicians recorded the album live with no overdubs is mindblowing indeed. On "Miami Weiss", Perrachia plays an undulating drum pattern over deep synth notes to generate a pulsing groove reminiscent of Giorgio Moroder. On "Ilary Blastbeat", however, the duo come over as a sort of thrash metal version of Van Der Graaf Generator. If that all sounds like several car crashes per song, Gotho's music is high on excitement and has structural integrity, even on the 26 minute "Gatta The Blanc" which includes a seven minute solo keyboard extravaganza.

If Gotho allow themselves to nod towards the past, American quartet Polyphia's musical synthesis is almost exclusively about now. On *Remember That You Will Die*, Clay Aeschliman demonstrates how kit drummers have been influenced by electronic and synthetic rhythms – in his case, trap, drill and drum 'n' bass breakbeats as well as rock and metal. On "The Audacity" the combination of his highly tuned snare and supertight timing, and Clay Gober's hyperactive slap bass, sounds like the rhythm section had been recorded and then sped up. Guitarists Tim Henson and Scott LePage play in jazz, metal and even classical acoustic styles, with a generous helping of shredding, all with jaw-dropping technique.

Polyphia's music is essentially melodic but full of bizarre juxtapositions. They claim that their main influences are currently hiphop, rap and pop. Among the many guests, "Chimera" features rapper Lil West, and on "ABC" Sophia Black does an Auto-Tuned turn after a cartoonish pile-up with elements of Todd Rundgren and Frank Zappa. There are horns from production duo Brasstracks, and on "Ego Death" guitarist Steve Vai adds to the overload.

The album is as audacious as it is emotionally remote, crammed so full of detail as to be both compelling and rather repulsive. Seeing Henson demonstrate his chops on YouTube is astonishing – to misquote Captain Beefheart, anyone else who calls themselves a guitarist better get busy. But do Polyphia really need to get *this* busy?

Mike Barnes

Abby and Jared Lank

Heith
X, wheel
Pan DL/LP
From 12th century mysticism through the Renaissance to the world of modern mass media, the circle symbolises a boundless godlike presence that controls the world. What connects Meister Eckhart, Giordano Bruno and Marshall McLuhan is the idea of the circle having a "centre nowhere and margins everywhere". Ironically McLuhan used the medieval definition of God to describe the age of electrically distributed information – his notion of "acoustic space". The description also fits his understanding of cyberspace, the way he foresaw it.

The connection between mysticism and the digital environment is crucial for the Milanese producer, artist and Haunter Records co-founder Daniele Guerrini, who has been working under the Heith alias since the mid-2010s. At first *X, wheel* is a disorienting and erratic listen. Tracks swing between hi-tech glitch, doom heaviness, avant jazz tendencies and something akin to Goblin's scores for Dario Argento.

What connects all of this is the album's constant repetition/variation of patterns and an overwhelming sense of eeriness. *X, wheel* is surprisingly very guitar-driven. With the help of guest musicians, Heith manages to entangle the materiality of acoustic instruments with deconstructed beats in a fashion typical of the Pan catalogue. At the same time, he pushes the aesthetic of digital occultism crafted via his Haunter Records output into new contexts.

The album features contributions by Jacopo Battaglia, drummer of Roman esoteric prog outfit Zu, who has collaborated with David Tibet. He's present on the standout track "()()(), 21, wheel of fortune". Led by gentle rasgueado guitar and layered with a vibrating beat and synthetic vocal murmurs, it's brought fully to life by Battaglia's powerful drumming before concluding with warm sounding trumpet. More prog electronica than so-called conceptronica, *X, wheel* is an unusual, spellbinding record on which Heith forges a distinctive musical persona out of disparate sound worlds.
Miloš Hroch

Holodec
All Dogs Come From Wolves
Scorpio Red/Boomkat Editions DL/LP
The latest from Scorpio Red – a label curated by Kelman Duran and Ans M – is this delicate record by Los Angeles based Holodec. This being the label's fourth release, a pattern emerges: Duran's own *Night In Tijuana*, ONY's *Children Of The Apocalypse* and LC & Charles Verni's *Gaze-Star* might span genres from dancehall to ambient to hyperpop, but there's a tinge of cool melancholy to each. *All Dogs Come From Wolves* comes in as the label's most frigid to date.

The album flows together like a sonic potion, ambient solvent and percussive solute precipitating as hybrid dance forms. In "Just U", the formula results in a two-step rhythm that's more endothermic than effervescent, a wispy synth line blanketing the groove in a layer of frost. The way Holodec chops up and filters his vocal samples removes all semblance of warmth, leaving only a sense of vague yearning – witness lead single "Bounce" where he reconfigures an R&B vocal into a slinking, swinging track filled with bass weight and synth crackle. Elsewhere, the ambient soup coalesces imperfectly, if at all. "The Wild" begins with synths that melt into each other, congealing into a trudging beat at about three minutes in. It sounds as if the drum programming has been subject to data rot, every other kick omitted, hats firing at odd intervals.

The record is an "ode to Asian American identity" but without the cue from the sleevenotes you might miss it. After all, what exactly is "Asian American identity" and what does it sound like? That identity consists of contested, imaginary boundaries, as difficult to pin down as the album's genre composition. In any case, this particular instance of Asian American music fits in nicely alongside diasporic musicians like labelmate ONY, bod [包家巷] and x/o, all of whom draw from a similarly melancholic sonic palette.
James Gui

The Howling
All Hail Mega Force
The Tapeworm MC
William Fowler Collins
Alone Inside The Walls Of Night
The Tapeworm MC
Stonecirclesampler
Deep Blue Aquatic Creatures
The Tapeworm MC
Like its namesake, the output of esoteric London based cassette label The Tapeworm is apt to bring on some unsettling symptoms. *All Hail Mega Force* is a collaboration between author, broadcaster and *Wire* contributor Ken Hollings and Robin 'Howlround' Warren. The album comprises two elongated pieces of garbled looping vocals recorded in the Wimpy bar on London's Streatham High Road, and whose dialogue references an obscure kids film from the 1980s.

It's hard to decide if those factors are the most dadaist thing about the pieces or the pieces themselves: "All Hail Mega Force" loops the words of its title into a gradually shifting sequence, while "Are You Man Enough For Mega Force?" dissolves a manically solipsistic sample into slowly degrading fuzz. The cumulative effect of both causes a kind of mesmeric disorientation which is only usually experienced when ill.

On his previous record, New England born and now New Mexico based William Fowler Collins evokes a vast and parched American interior, leeched of its cinematic romance to leave just nihilist drones rolling across wide vistas. *Alone Inside The Walls Of Night* sets the sun on that same soundscape, draping it in a slow moving nocturnality. On "I" violin and synthesizer find a stillness akin to a sonic middle distance stare, as though trapped in a soporific gaze across melancholic hinterlands. On "II" this sense of dislocation escalates into something more visceral, violin and synthesizer rising into a crescendo of snarling guitar, like a hot pain deep in your gut.

Stonecirclesampler is Luke J Murray and *Deep Blue Aquatic Creatures* is a chillier distillation of the kind of work he creates as one half of Iceman Junglist Kru, condensing similarly dank crunch into waves of creeping murk. It begins with the almost 15 minute roll of "Underwater Oil" where mechanised creaks and groans sink into a low and constant marine hum. As the piece progresses, jittery rattle and clank intensify to match an inky drone that grips the source of these sounds, squeezing them to breaking point. The second track "The Serpent Swallows Its Soul" replaces submarine bubble and hiss with ominous hyperbaric rumble. Together these pieces register like experiencing a slow oceanic descent from inside a broken diving bell. Murray has a knack for conjuring these cold aquatic textures. Here, he also manages to make them sound a bit like how the bends might feel.
Spenser Tomson

Isomonstrosity
Isomonstrosity
Brassland DL/LP/MC
Isomonstrosity is a quarantine project assembled by composer Ellen Reid, conductor Yuga Cohler and rapper/producer/composer Johan Lenox. Described as "a pandemic symphony in rap and avant pop", the album is a collage of musical contributions sourced from a range of new music composers – Bryce Dessner, Nina C Young, Wang Lu, Marcos Balter, Carlos Simon and themselves. The material was recorded remotely by members of The International Contemporary Ensemble, sliced and diced in post-production, and overlaid with performances from featured vocalists drawn from contemporary rap and avant pop scenes: Danny Brown, 645AR, Zacari, Kacy Hill and more. The creators claim the work reflects the mood of the limited conditions under which it was made. As a listening experience, the mood feels vibrant and adventurous.

It opens with a short "Intro" of furious cello arpeggios, giving way to clanging classical shapes and trippy sound design, before moving seamlessly into the clanging beat of "Shining", featuring Tommy Genesis, whose coolly insolent vocal rides atop bumpy, bubbling cello and antique piano. "Watch It Burn" assembles electronic samples, noisy transients and snippets of acoustic instruments into a strangely textural, almost haptic beat. Another highlight is the instrumental "Break Glass", a maximal flex of classically inspired sound design.

There are moments when the voluptuous arrangements threaten to destabilise the balance. Indeed, towards the end of the album a slight fatigue sets in: is it possible to have too many good ideas? What makes this record interesting and compelling, beyond its highly tooled creativity and boldness of execution, is in the way it chops up and rearranges the cultural values of urban and classical musics: swagger, poise, decolonisation, prestige.
Leah Kardos

Keith Jarrett
Bordeaux Concert
ECM CD/DL
Robert Schumann captures it best: "If, at the piano, you try to form little melodies, that is fine; but if they come to mind of themselves when you are not practising, that will please you all the more; for the internal organ of music is then roused in you. The fingers do what the head desires; not the other way round." And there it is, the only line that might hope to make sense of this extraordinary, transcendent record, one that might mark Keith Jarrett's farewell to art.

Jarrett's responses to the turning world are inscribed in a migratory progress round the world and in dialogues with some of its great pianos. It begins properly with *The Köln Concert* in 1975 (though there was a Hamburg trio and solo appearances in Bremen and Lausanne before that) and from there, following pins and threads on the world map, continues across Japan (*Sun Bear Concerts*, *Dark Intervals*, *Radiance*), Bregenz and Munich, Paris, Vienna, Milan (*La Scala*), New York, Venice, London and Paris again, Rio, and then the extraordinary late trilogy of *Munich*, *Budapest* and now *Bordeaux*. These latter three performances from 2016 reflect startlingly different aspects of Jarrett's musical nature. Connect those pins and threads and you might find a mystic shape.

Bordeaux is the perfect reflection of Schumann's words, but we're hearing nothing less than a bunch of musical synapses switching on and interfacing with an instrument at a level of complexity and beauty no machine more modern than the pianoforte has ever achieved. If the *Munich* and *Budapest* concerts, released on ECM in 2019 and 2020, reflected a vigour that jarred with the news of his failing health, the *Bordeaux* sequence, a sweeping catenary of 13 contrasting inventions, seems to come direct from the composer's unconscious, unmediated by technique, repertory or even any reliably nameable style. There are blues measures here, but happened across the way Beethoven happened across them, and that's not a ridiculous comparison. There are stride figures that never came from Harlem. And there are moments of gracious lyricism that sound like a distillation of everything Duke Ellington, Teddy Wilson

and Bill Evans ever did, but without reference to any of them.

It's pointless to talk about individual tracks because the performance is indivisible. It actually doesn't work in any other order. It would be ironic, but somehow typical and fitting, if Jarrett were to issue his greatest statements in the absence of the physical power to repeat or reproduce them, but that's how it sounds. The internal organ, roused.

Brian Morton

Sarathy Korwar
Kalak
Leaf CD/DL

There is the click-click of a gas lighter and a sound like frying ghee, except the slightly nasal voice that delivers the recipe instructs us to use paste in a dry frying pan and enough turmeric to cover the taste of the ten grams of privilege seeds required. Then we are away, armed with "A Recipe To Cure Historical Amnesia" and carried along on the wide-open tabla lines and flute of "To Remember".

Sarathy Korwar's fourth album, a collaboration with electronic producer Photay, is even looser in feel than its predecessors, at times almost woozily casual until one hears with what a light but firm hand the drummer holds the music together. Korwar blends the music of the Sidi people, who originated in the Horn of Africa, with what sound like Senegalese and Ghanaian rhythms, but does so without any sense of Afro-Indian synthesis or pancontinental nonsense. The rhythms are made to work for the songs. They aren't paraded like ethnographical exhibits.

"Utopia Is A Colonial Project" starts with stalling synths that sound as if someone is trying to find a needed reference in the narrative. The beats come in uncertainly and then filled with what may prove to be spurious confidence. If the title means anything at all, Korwar has illustrated it perfectly. Utopias are, indeed, always colonies first. They are also subject to time and "That Clocks Don't Tell But Make Time" is the key track on the album, deceptively simple drum rhythms with buzzing, remote instrumental backdrops. Are they beating out a message of hope or warning? You can't keep time by these rhythms; as with much else on the record, you simply have to live within them.

It hardly seems any time – though it's one of many arrivals that fell behind the event horizon of Covid – since Korwar emerged with the intriguing but rather slight *Day To Day*. This new album manages to project an even simpler and more accessible surface with extraordinary depths of reference and feeling, even a track dedicated to Begum Rokeya, the Bengali feminist educator and author of the extraordinary gender-switching utopian fiction *Sultana's Dream*. It's the 90th anniversary of her death this year and Korwar's whole record is a worthy memorial as well as a warning. Things have changed. Things have not changed much.

The cure concludes: *"Stir continuously and ponder. Memories need to cook. Nostalgia is steamed away. Make a mental note to remember this recipe"*.

Brian Morton

James Brandon Lewis Quartet
MSM Molecular Systematic Music Live
Intakt 2×CD/DL

Say What
Say What
We Jazz DL/2×LP

Say What purports to be the work of an anonymous band who played once at the Sonic Transmissions festival in Austin, Texas, leaving this live recording as sole evidence. A little rudimentary detective work reveals it's James Brandon Lewis Trio – almost certainly including Luke Stewart on electric bass and Warren 'Trae' Crudup III on drums – playing music from their 2017 album *No Filter*.

"Sit back and hold on to your seats," announces Lewis at the start and it's a fun ride for sure, kicking off with "Say What", the lead track from *No Filter* – lumbering, doomy funk rock with filthy fuzz bass, stylistically adjacent to the work Lewis and Crudup have created together as Blacks' Myths. Lewis's tenor announces itself with a throaty cry reminiscent of Pharoah Sanders, becoming more gnarled as bass and drums flip from insistent throb to freeform flailing. Throughout the continuous hour long performance, Lewis issues blunt, emphatic blasts (recalling Ian Underwood's brash solo for the ages on Frank Zappa's equally dirty "The Gumbo Variations") and later finds the energy to preach lustily with altissimo abandon.

The contrast with the album by Lewis's quartet is considerable. Another live recording, this time from May 2021, it documents the first public performance of music from the quartet's 2020 album *Molecular* and reveals a unit operating with extremely high levels of poise and sophistication. While the studio takes were relatively concise, in the wild they stretch out – often to more than twice their original length – providing plenty of room for extended solos and some breathtaking spontaneous interplay.

There's more than a hint of the highwire spontaneity and fluidity of Wayne Shorter's later work – albeit more rhythmically grounded by drummer Chad Taylor's tight polyrhythmic certainty. Here, too, Lewis gives full voice to a spiritually charged, yearning tone echoing the intense sincerity of David S Ware.

Pianist Aruán Ortiz is on mercurial form throughout, betraying his Cuban roots on pieces like the driving Latin vamp of "Breaking Code" with Lewis giving him free rein to explore, waiting seven full minutes before bringing in the sax. Different in tone and mood, both albums foreground Lewis's unflagging commitment and drive.

Daniel Spicer

Magma
Kārtëhl
Seventh CD/DL/LP

While the music of Magma is timeless, their new album *Kārtëhl* is timeless in a way that exudes distinctly 1970s vibes: its wood-panelled, shag carpet prog journeys are delivered with a righteously cultish theatricality that recalls a time when *Hair* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* were the hottest tickets on New York's Broadway and London's West End.

The key to the album's time capsule quality may be found in the two bonus tracks included at its end – demos of "Hakëhn Deïs" and "Dëhndë" recorded by Magma's Christian Vander with the late René Garber in 1978. These stripped down piano and voice demos provide a delightfully raw glimpse into Magma's songwriting process, which has often been described more like a form of channelling than conventional composition. On the demos, every musical part besides the piano is precisely articulated with *"Dip-dip-doo-be-dats"*.

Fully fleshed instrumental versions of these two songs – replete with Vander's expressive drumming and the lush, Aquarian vocal harmonies of a six-woman choir anchored by his longtime collaborator (and former wife) Stella Vander Linon – bookend the newly recorded portion of the album, thus establishing its tone. Like the composition "Zëss", which dates from the 1970s but never got the studio treatment until 2019, these two songs have been taken out of cold storage and given new life alongside four additional forays into the weird, wonderful world of zeuhl, created with a new line-up formed in 2020. All of these songs are written in Vander's self-created mythical language Kobaïan, the liquid logos which serves as both code and substance for Magma's epically glossolalic peregrinations.

While the overall tone of *Kārtëhl* is joyful and buoyant, there are moments of depth and dissonance, especially in the nine minute heavy groover "Wïï Mëlëhn Tü". Such moments make the album's major key climaxes feel all the more exuberant and well-earned.

Emily Pothast

Moin
Paste
AD 93 DL/LP

As Raime, Joe Andrews and Tom Halstead always cited post-hardcore in the same breath as grime and garage. The London based duo mixed rock tropes into gloomy dub techno, but their side project Moin is, to put it simply, Raime in reverse.

SOFA592
Mattie Barbier
threads
(CD/DL)

SOFA594
Ingar Zach
Musica Liquida
(LP/CD/DL)

SOFA595
Jan Martin Smørdal/
Øystein Wyller Odden
Kraftbalanse
(LP/CD/DL)

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Which means their knowledge of the US indie rock underground is pushed to the foreground.

Moin's first demos were released on the now defunct label Blackest Ever Black in the early 2010s. 2021 saw the project return with the full-length *Moot!, on which* Andrews and Halstead were joined by unorthodox Italian percussionist Valentina Magaletti to officially form a trio. The title *Paste* is true to Moin's recording and mixing practice, where instruments are isolated and manipulated. Even Magaletti's drumming parts are performed separately and recontextualised into post-hardcore collages.

Echoes of Shellac or Sonic Youth are audible in the guitar parts, but Moin's instrumentation operates far outside the rock schema. In "Melon" the titular riff is heavily distorted and digitally processed to sound almost chemical (a similar caustic effect is employed by bands such as The Body or Uniform). The guitar loop in the metronomic "Yep Yep" transmutes into drilling sounds, and the track is drowned in screams of fear.

In very post-hardcore fashion, the only narration on *Paste* is provided by spoken word fragments which tell a tale of failed communication and induce an atmosphere of unease. The album is filled with the constant tension of things falling apart, as on the spine-tingling "Forgetting Is Like Syrup" where a counterintuitive rhythm and Slint-like guitar melody are corrupted by white noise and digital glitches, as though infected by a computer virus. *Paste* is Moin at their strongest, at once familiar and strangely new.

Miloš Hroch

Hedvig Mollestad & Trondheim Jazz Orchestra
Maternity Beat
Rune Grammofon CD/DL/2×LP

Norse guitar wrangler Hedvig Mollestad has worked with Trondheim Jazz Orchestra before, over a decade ago. In that context, she was one of an extensive line-up gathered to record with domestic trombonist Øyvind Brække. *Maternity Beat*, conversely, is definitively her own concept, recorded with a smaller orchestra (a dozen musicians, plus Mollestad herself) and based on her arrangements. It's grander in scope than any previous release with her name on the cover, befitting the rep she's accrued as a practitioner of metallic jazz fusion.

These expanded horizons are reflected in the appearance of vocals, almost uniquely on a Mollestad composition, and a loose thematic thread based on her internal wrestling over parenting and privilege. On "Her Own Shape", lyrics about protecting one's offspring is reflected in a lullaby-esque feel, a distinctly gentle take on spiritual jazz. "Maternity Suite" bears the voices of three women – Mollestad, Ingebjørg Loe Bjørnstad and Mai Elise Solberg – and its psychedelic big band maximalism builds to an elegant peak in the seventh of nearly ten minutes. Here, the jazz orchestra fill their nominal billing, likewise on "Little Lucid Demons/Alfons", where Trine Knutsen's flutes are playful and quizzical at first; Martin Myhre Olsen's baritone saxophone segment, later on, is positively rumbustious.

With plenty of choice Mollestad riffs – meandering, but hulkingly – amid already complex instrumental sections, *Maternity Beat* often blurs lines between jazz, rock and prog. Album opener "On The Horizon, Part 1" may be brief, but its doom-laden delicacy has the spirit of Henry Cow and Carla Bley. "Donna Ovis Peppa" foregrounds Adrian Løseth Waade's violin over Mollestad's blurry playing, and on "All Flights Cancelled" Torstein Lofthus's drums are like a bar blues version of motorik; the guitar has the tone of space rock but steps outside the lines à la John McLaughlin.

Noel Gardner

Bill Nace
Through A Room
Drag City DL/LP

A guitar lick distorted and squashed to the point where it sounds like digital microtonal manipulation sloshes and collapses in the left stereo channel, while an ensemble of oblique voices dances across it, overflowing to the right side. Then a revolving riff takes shape and silences everything. With these hermetic yet enthralling abstractions US guitarist and noise improvisor Bill Nace opens *Through A Room*, destroying and rebuilding a series of lyrical atmospheres.

Continuing where he left off with 2020's *Both*, Nace structures the album similarly, wrapping effects around cut, spliced and collaged loops. However, the texture of the individual ingredients is now richer, and in turn their arrangements are more intricate. While sparse guitar contortions made *Both* a melancholic record, the expanded palette here expresses a more nuanced but equally disarming range of emotions. Nace's instrumentarium has evolved along his compositional approach to include tapes, found objects and a taishōgoto – a Japanese harp-like instrument. With this extended array of noise sources in play, the music becomes elusive and slippery, able to reshape itself from listen to listen and draw attention to a different layer each time.

Crinkling and scratching blares bunch up, clash and grow into a flock of birds on "Les Echos (Piece For Tuba)". They are left to float gently on hissing waves, only for a hard edged guitar texture to sweep them away in one bittersweet swoop. Elsewhere, a seesawing riff refracts like light through a prism on "Boil First", leaving heartbreak behind; "E:E" and "When Orange" meanwhile suggest radio recordings retrieved from a collapsed world. "Ann" then provides intimate contrast as optimistic chirps paint a dreamy neighbourhood at sunset, unprepared for the destruction of "Outro" where a harrowing noise akin to a clown trumpet serenades the end, surrounded by exploding circus attractions.

Antonio Poscic

Network Glass & Jason Crumer
Prerequisite
Misanthropic Agenda CD

This record by US electronic musicians Network Glass (formerly known as Door) and Jason Crumer is named for the latter's conviction that composers such as John Cage and Conlon Nancarrow are "a prerequisite to understanding the whole of America" – a perspective he sees as inaccessible to those uninitiated in either institutional or countercultural circles.

Prerequisite does nothing to rectify this situation, but it certainly emphasises it. Developed from an adaptation of Cage's *Fontana Mix* and released by Misanthropic Agenda – a label whose most high profile releases have been by Merzbow and John Wiese – it's a suite of six good old-fashioned noise tracks without a hint of rhythm or melody (with the exception of a two second interpolation of classical music around the eight minute mark of the fifth track). There is scant chance this record will reach anyone who isn't already well-versed in underground music, and on the off chance that it does, it is more likely to scare them off seeking out the Cage piece, rather than illuminate its significance.

Fontana Mix consists of a score and four multichannel tapes featuring, inter alia, recordings of the city and the countryside. In 2020, Network Glass released *Twitch*, his own album of recordings, made on the titular live streaming platform. But there is nothing recognisable as a field recording on *Prerequisite*. Its Incapacitants-esque assault is often punctuated by anxious oases of reverberation which give a distinct sense of space. However, this is space as opposed to the place of field recordings. It is an indeterminate arena of non-being lacking in co-ordinates.

This emphasises the most remarkable thing about this record – while there is nothing on it that noise fans won't have heard before, it nevertheless seems like a tabula rasa, recalling nothing and referring to nothing outside of itself.

Daniel Neofetou

Maggie Nicols
Are You Ready?
Otoroku 2×CD/DL/LP

"Trust in Allah, but remember to tether your camel." When Evan Parker shared that nugget of Sufi wisdom with singer Maggie Nicols, she recognised how it might be adapted to match her own approach to making music. Place trust in the spirit that moves you, but ensure you are suitably prepared. Regular practice is a labour of love for Nicols. It anchors her improvising, enabling her voice to range freely, while still firmly connected to life as she experiences it daily. On *Are You Ready?* Nicols, accompanying herself on piano, displays amazing vocal scope and versatility, while speaking from the heart.

If she were ready to narrow her expressive horizons, she would surely be acclaimed as a remarkably fine interpreter of standards. But she fiercely resists such delimiting definition. The contours of each song forming this solo set open up to accommodate her expansive yet highly personal sense of possibilities. A lovingly nurtured melody may veer into glossolalic fireworks, stretch out in textures that carry the imprint of her breathing interior, or embrace spoken interludes – conversations with herself, her late mother Zouïna or other absent friends. Here, in close focus, is the exuberant unpredictability that has characterised Nicols's work since the late 1960s when, as a member of Spontaneous Music Ensemble, she started to explore seriously what it might mean to be a singer.

In this intimate communion with listeners, Nicols's passionate engagement is everywhere evident. An alluring ballad may channel a pungent political message or telling ethical reflection. The CD edition includes a bonus disc of improvisations where her piano is assigned a dramatic and allusive role, while multitracked vocals, variously accented and multilingual, emerge and confide, criss-cross and exchange. This is music as social commentary, memoir, love letter, confessional. It's Nicols doing what comes naturally, on a basis of practice and trust.

Julian Cowley

Oort Smog
Every Motherfucker Is Your Brother
AKP DL/LP

Alex Cunningham/Patrick Shiroishi/ Thom Nguyen
Basket Of Knives
Astral Editions DL/MC

Patrick Shiroishi
Evergreen
Touch DL

A trio of transmissions involving Los Angeles based Japanese-American composer and multi-instrumentalist Patrick Shiroishi. In Oort Smog he comes together with fellow Upsilon Acrux member Mark Kimbrel to give us *Every Motherfucker Is Your Brother*, a freewheeling half-hour that flows from minimalist waves of clarinet and sax, through turbid waves of rolling beats and layered texture, overdubs allowing colour and vivid orchestration in (I swear I can hear a bit of klezmer in there) while still feeling like a tight duo playing off each other's ideas.

The even better *Basket Of Knives* sees Shiroishi join forces with Vietnamese-American percussionist Thom Nguyen and St Louis based violinist Alex Cunningham for four tracks of improvised music. "Good News Doesn't Travel In The Middle Of The Night" is a fragmentary blend of drones, rippling saxophone and bustling

Extra texture: Giovanni Di Domenico

Annalisa Lazoi

Italian composer and multi-instrumentalist **Giovanni Di Domenico** demonstrates his mastery of space, time and texture across three remarkable albums. By **Stewart Smith**

Giovanni Di Domenico & Zugzwang
Wesen
Silent Water DL/2×LP
Giovanni Di Domenico
Polvere Di Rabbia
Kohlhaas DL/LP
Giovanni Di Domenico & Tatsuhisa Yamamoto
Mokusatsu
Matière Mémoire Editions DL/MC

In improvised music settings, Giovanni Di Domenico favours minimalism over bombast, his elegant piano motifs and keen sense of space acting as a cool contrast to the fire raging around him. Those qualities carry into the Italian composer and multi-instrumentalist's production work, where he creates shifting textures from the patient layering, panning and processing of parts.

Created with regular collaborators Pak Yan Lau, Mathieu Calleja and João Lobo, *Polvere Di Rabbia* brings the voice into focus, with Di Domenico and Lucia Palladino reciting lyrics drawn from the composer's automatic writing experiments. "Il Treno" sets the scene, with Di Domenico weaving his voice through an atmospheric texture of Rhodes piano chords, eerie pitch-shifted synths and submerged drums.

Di Domenico's vocal delivery is measured and slightly mysterious, leaving the music to create a sense of drama. Shards of electric piano, grinding oscillators and tactile percussion darken and intensify the mood, leading us straight into "Un Unico Volto" where his voice and spare acoustic piano hold the ground beneath a flock of squawking synths. Built around a series of Philip Glass-like organ motifs, "Le Bestie Feroci" brings chattering voices into the mix. Distorted and overlapping, the voices move around the stereo field like in a field recording of a train station. Di Domenico develops that idea on "Un Uovo", using his own voice and that of Palladino. At certain points their voices move in counterpoint, before resolving in unison. But for the most part they're separate, an estrangement effect intensified by the unsettling electronics and economical percussion. On the closing "Neve Senza Vento", Di Domenico achieves a fine balance between the ambient drift of his Rhodes piano and the nervous chittering of the percussion, with electronic blips and pulses lifting the music out of the shadows.

Di Domenico has collaborated extensively with drummer Tatsuhisa Yamamoto, most prominently in their Bonjintan quartet with Jim O'Rourke and Akira Sakata. At first *Mokusatsu* appears to be an acoustic piano and drums set, albeit one recorded in a highly reverberant space. "The Silence" unfolds slowly, yet the duo define the shape of the piece from the get go. Di Domenico's stately piano chords hang in the air, accented by Yamamoto's cymbals and jangling bells. Processed cymbals glimmer from a reverb fog, merging with the live percussion. As the piano drops out, grainy field recordings trickle in. We hear singing in the streets, an echo of the left wing protests that provided the backdrop to Di Domenico's childhood. Long organ tones slowly stack up, strafed by feedback, gaining intensity until a harp-like sweep across the piano strings changes the mood. Yamamoto lays a steady pulse behind it all, building momentum before the piece falls into a ghostly coda of environmental sounds and bowed cymbals.

The atmospherics continue on "A Murder" where metallic tones are complemented by the muffled howls and lamentations of Emmanuel Cremer's cello. After building a texture where electronics merge seamlessly with piano and drums, the final section strips it all back. The clarity is quite startling, underlining the strength of the trio's improvisation and the ingenuity of Di Domenico's studio enhancements.

Presented as the third chapter in Di Domenico's study of "psychedelic abstract funk and German existentialist philosophy" (following 2017's *The Ear Cannot Be Filled With Hearing* and 2020's *Reflection Is Circular*) *Wesen* grafts propulsive space rock grooves onto the composer's minimalist motifs, with the sound design enhancing the trip. While there are echoes of vintage synth prog and kosmische – Tangerine Dream, Goblin, Heldon, Harmonia – Di Domenico extinguishes any retro fetishism with modern synth sounds and elements of free jazz and Anatolian psych. For all the track titles, the album mostly feels like a series of extended jams that merge into each other. The feedback tones, fizzy distortion and filtered synths of "Du Musst Dir Eine Frage Stellen" flow into the two note bass motif and shuffling drums of "Fühl Ich Mich Glücklich?". New sounds emerge every few seconds – muted trumpet, oscillator swirls, modular bleeps, processed baritone sax – with the drums gathering force behind them.

The introduction of Kostas Benis's electric saz and voice takes the music into another dimension, his phased modal lines unspooling over distorted polymetric drums. On "Man Kann Nur Fragen, Habe Ich Mich Glücklich Gefühlt?", the cyclic motifs are handed to saxophonists Riccardo Marogna and Grégoire Tirtiaux, who spin them out into free counterpoint, alternating between altissimo squalls and deep wormholes. As with the closing "Wesen" – a sweeping space rock epic with choral synths reminiscent of Popol Vuh – the music never quite explodes, all the better to build tension and dynamics. ☐

percussion that grows from a slipstream of sonic suggestion into a coalesced river of surging focus, closing with a gratifyingly noisy coda.

"That Kind Of Hell" is pure city heat, echo and delay slathered over the sax, beats burbling in with a subterranean rumble and the violin colouring in the sky with (g)rainy arcs of grey. "Noon Rings Out" starts as a Bartokian string quartet that then becomes the gloomiest work reveille you could imagine before slipping into total mayhem. The closing title track is the most fully-realised piece here. Lugubrious, shadowy deep string lines and drones slowly rise to the surface, to be blasted by noisy, turbid whorls of street level static and squealing saxophone.

The most moving of the three releases is *Evergreen*, composed, performed and recorded in September but touched deeply by field recordings Shiroishi took at Evergreen Cemetery, Los Angeles, in 2021. The Evergreen Cemetery is where several generations of Shiroishi's family are buried, and he conducted these recordings while thinking about the history of violence towards the Japanese American community, a history that shows no sign of abating, and touches these essentially hopeful pieces with a vital patina of mournfulness and resistance. The four tracks here are beautifully measured between the green and the grey, the trees and the stones, strung out moments of reverie and reflection that come together in a deeply plangent emotional wallop that reminds me of the most moving moments of Nate Schieble's *Fairfax*. *Evergreen* is unmissable but all three of these records confirm Shiroishi as a name to keep on your radar.
Neil Kulkarni

Oxbow & Peter Brötzmann
An Eternal Reminder Of Not Today/Live At Moers
Trost/Sleeping Giant Glossolalia CD/DL/LP
The latest release by Californian art blues band Oxbow will likely be a revelation – to Peter Brötzmann fans. Recorded live at the Moers Festival in 2017, this one-off collaboration is a demonstration of the principle that one can be heavy without being anywhere even close to the realm of metal.

It's also proof that Brötzmann, generally regarded as a free jazz flamethrower, is in fact (as his bandmates and collaborators in various projects and ad hoc encounters will happily attest) a keen and careful listener who would much rather contribute to a collective sound than simply blow over everyone else. Here, as on his own 1994 album *Songlines* – featuring bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Rashied Ali – and his 2019 solo release *I Surrender Dear*, he digs deep into the blues, his tenor sax providing a second lead voice alongside frontman Eugene Robinson.

The two match each other in degree of intensity; when Robinson descends to a hoarse whisper, Brötzmann murmurs behind him, and when the singer rises to full roar, the saxophonist does the same. At the same time, he honours the structures of the songs, staying locked in with the rest of the band throughout. Guitarist Niko Wenner, bassist Dan Adams and drummer Greg Davis reshape the songs – which come from *Fuckfest*, *King Of The Jews*, *Serenade In Red*, *An Evil Heat* and *Thin Black Duke* – on the fly, taking them through a series of crescendos and climaxes, sometimes letting the groove simmer and rumble, and other times exploding in feedback, thunder and clang.

And since Oxbow's music has always been about control – maintaining it for as long as possible, relinquishing it only when chaos becomes inevitable – adding Brötzmann to the mix is more or less the equivalent of putting an exclamation mark at the end of precisely crafted sentences.
Phil Freeman

Jeff Parker ETA IVtet
Mondays At The Enfield Tennis Academy
Eremite/Aguirre 2×CD/DL/2×LP
Jeff Parker's recent ensemble recordings *The New Breed* and *Suite For Max Brown* are family affairs. Each is named after one of his parents, both feature singing by his daughter Ruby. Their jazz informed tunes and sample based rhythms apply the creative methods he's employed with Rob Mazurek and Tortoise to material that you could play for multiple generations at a backyard barbecue.

But Parker's also a practicing jazz musician. In recent years he's kept up his chops by holding down a Monday night gig at ETA, a cocktail joint in a northeastern suburb of Los Angeles. Most of the musicians on *Mondays At The Enfield Tennis Academy* (the title links the bar with a fictional location from David Foster Wallace's novel *Infinite Jest*) have appeared on the aforementioned LPs, and its music is rooted in the same cultural and stylistic loam.

But the feel and methodology are quite different. For if the studio records are compiled from years of beatmaking and studio polish, this live counterpart is all about striking up a groove and riding it for as long as possible. Instead of digestible tunes, it comprises four side-long jams drawn from three nights in 2019 and 2021, all unified by a spacy, cranium bobbing vibe. You don't sustain that kind of feel simply by laying down a groove; you have to simultaneously keep it going and vary it, so that head nodding conveys appreciative engagement, not induced somnolence. Each musician adopts a groove-plus approach, adding tunes, subtracting beats and spinning tension building, counterintuitive phrases off the common path, but never tripping it up.

There's a hint of dub in Anna Butterss's mutations and subtractions, and bottomless depth in Jay Bellerose's unhurried syncopations. Parker's guitar and Josh Johnson's alto saxophone fearlessly court wooziness by slipping wobble-pitched samples in and out of the mix; there's a passage during "2021-04-28" where they sound like they're channelling the synth voices of late 1980s Robert Wyatt. But Parker also looses some fine, exploratory solos, confident that whatever he does, the bottom's not going to drop out. Don't wait up kids, dad and his crew are coming home late tonight.
Bill Meyer

Theo Parrish
DJ Kicks: Detroit Forward
!K7 2×CD/DL/3×LP
That subtitle is important – unlike other entries in the *DJ Kicks* series these are pretty much all brand spanking new tracks, commissioned specifically for this mix, showcasing what Parrish calls those Detroit artists who "defy tradition, those that side step the inaccurate definitions [of the Detroit sound] from outside positions". When this outsider thinks Detroit, whether it's soul or proto-punk or techno or hiphop or avant funk, I always think excitement and feel a strange resonance because it's a decaying Motor City like my own hometown of Coventry.

But I feel none of that here. I get what Parrish and the selected artists are doing – this is a sophisticated suite of downtempo, subtle grooves and ideas – but nothing here snags me, stops me in my tracks. I turned it up, played it loud, played it out, played it in, with the bass up, with the treble up, with everything up, waiting for a moment where either physically or mentally this soporific melange would get to me. Not a sausage. These tracks feel rushed, underdeveloped, lacking in ideas and far too polite: electronic music as accompaniment to a good quinoa salad and a craft beer.

Exceptions include Specter's "The Upper Room" which sparked nice Ultramarine memories – even if it does hang around for far too long; Deon Jamar's "North End Funk" which at least starts with some nicely frictive Jaco Pastorius-like bass chords, but like so much here goes nowhere with its ideas; and mBtheLight's "aGAIN" which, simply by dint of being beatless, rises above the mediocrity around it and catches the ear. The rest is a jazz brunch. And nobody wants or needs that.
Neil Kulkarni

Pink Siifu & Real Bad Man
Real Bad Flights
Real Bad Man DL/LP
With every release from Birmingham, Alabama artist Pink Siifu comes a breath of fresh air. His impossible to pigeonhole, never stagnating style of rap embodies the spirit of the culture itself, as well as the melting pot of influences and neighbouring genres that bleed into it. His 2021 album *GUMBO'!* was a prime example of this, confidently striding into an abundance of different sounds and embracing a spectrum of guests.

Now a year later Siifu returns with his latest offering, a collaborative project with Los Angeles production and clothing crew Real Bad Man. The result is *Real Bad Flights*, which arrives as an arguably more straightforward rap release than its predecessor, while also still flecked with the flavours that underpin Siifu's brand.

That more straightforward feel comes predominantly from Real Bad Man's production, which gravitates towards sample heavy beats, but to simply label them as that would be a disservice, such is the variation in their forms. The funk-laden opening strains of "Real Negro Life" serve as the ideal introduction, while elsewhere the energetic flute-driven pulse of "Tokyo Blunts", featuring Armand Hammer and Conquest Tony Phillips, keeps the momentum going. Things ease back beautifully for the final run from "Pour The Wine" through to closer "Real Bad Gospel", with Siifu's flows remaining nonchalant yet captivating for the duration. Boldy James and Amani are two more notable features from another strong selection of co-stars, with the former reigniting the same flames he found with Real Bad Man on their earlier escapades.

Real Bad Flights is another win for Siifu and another point at which his listeners may wonder where he will take them next. But as with all artists of his calibre – artists who find solace in revolution – I find the real joy comes from the surprise arrival at the destination.
Tim Fish

Ingrid Plum
Corporeality
Ryoanji CD/DL
The work of Lily Greenham has been somewhat overlooked aside from a few articles scattered across the internet, many of which describe the musician as an outsider. Of Danish origin and raised in Vienna, she lived in various European cities before settling in England in 1972. Writing about her album *Lingual Music* in a 2007 edition of *The Wire*, David Toop noted how Greenham distanced herself from attempts to classify her art. Listening now to those sound poems – which owe as much to previous involvement with experimental theatre and painting as they do to the London poetry scene through which she moved – they register like a coherent drive towards something esoteric but always just beyond our grasp, as though Greenham speaks a language known only to herself.

The work of sound artist Ingrid Plum is equally elusive, a mixture of field recordings and electronics which is particularly potent on *Corporeality*, a project intended as a direct response to Greenham's work. This is not an exercise in emulation. Indeed, the record's seven pieces contain a kind of hushed ethereality which is all Plum's own. What she does replicate is a sense of pure abstraction, not circling or creeping around it, but blooming immediately into

something ineffable and strange.

On "Subterranean" – a response to Greenham's "Underground" – Plum journeys into the claustrophobic tunnels of a tube station. Passengers chatter and buzz with mild panic as a Tannoy instructs them to evacuate. Rather than focusing on this, she places a fizzing drone at the centre of the sound, muffling the public hubbub – it might be the buzz of the electrified rail line or the suddenly audible gush of anxious blood through the body but, like the disorientating and oppressive clatter of Greenham's piece, Plum finds a sonic dissociation which is often uncomfortable.

Of the remaining tracks, only three are specific responses to earlier pieces, but all are pleasantly confusing and, like Greenham's work, Plum's is difficult to categorise or compare with contemporaries. The nearest neighbour might be Canadian sound artist crys cole, not that they share a specific sound, more a forthright idiosyncrasy and sonic bravery which is particularly evident in Plum's music here.

Spenser Tomson

Rabit

What Dreams May Come

Halcyon Veil DL/LP/MC

"It's funny to me because when I go to the club on a booking, making someone dance is not even in my head." So said Rabit (aka Eric Burton) in a 2015 *Fact* magazine interview. For his latest album, he's taken that attitude into the studio, creating heady patches of ambience and chopped 'n' screwed drum loops that aren't danceable so much as head-noddable. He's enlisted, for the first time, a roster of vocalists including Eartheater, Embaci, Lauren Auder and Colin Self.

More than the vocal work, however, the instrumentalists truly breathe life and warmth into this album. Maxwell Sterling's double bass tone is gravelly and rich on "Georgia Boy (Instrumental)" while on "Safe" he matches the scale of Burton's dense textural and rhythmic layering with expansive chords of his own. It's eventually the strings that win out, bringing things to a lull with a series of double stops. Victoria Wright contributes her guitar work to "No Ceiling" alongside Sterling's swelling strings and Embaci's gossamer warbling. Wright and Embaci join forces again on "Requiem", with Wright's bossa nova chords setting the foundation for Embaci's vocal acrobatics.

Lead single "Angelica" showcases Burton as most know him, sculpting a slogging rhythm out of deconstructed percussion. Eartheater's vocals find an apt home in the track's intro, before electronics take over completely. But for the rest of the album, Burton's modus operandi seems to align with his activities as a label head, showcasing a slice of his artistic milieu. Most of his collaborators are queer, a personal choice that intersects with the political on the wryly anti-capitalist "Georgia Boy Interlude". Though the album bears Rabit's moniker, it is truly an ensemble piece.

James Gui

Secluded Bronte

Live In Zurich

Ffordd Allan DL

Live At Supernormal

Ffordd Allan DL

Richard Thomas

The House Rabbit Of Jesus Green

Ffordd Allan DL

Secluded Bronte are Richard Thomas (guitars and vocal), and Adam and Jonathan Bohman (keys, vocals, other sounds). The trio open *Live In Zurich* with a track that angrily shouts out names of Swiss cities, engaging the crowd in a raucous chorus of *"INTERLAKEN!"*.

A water theme emerges from their characteristically multi-genrefied setlist. Tracks switch between pure electroacoustics and snatches of Pat Metheny-ish dinner jazz, funky grooves and playful Raymond Scott electronica. Grotesque sonic explosions morph into tinkling piano; vocal and guitar screeching turn into something that sounds like sustained vomiting inside the lid of a working player-piano. It's all recorded with one stereo pair of mics which highlights the band's excellent internal self-mixing, how tuned in they are to each other's detuned homemade instruments.

On *Live At Supernormal*, a theme of winding sounds prevails – toys, tools, motors. Metronomic electrical pulses are made beautiful by multiple layering into complex rhythms with melodic pitch changes, accompanied by spoken words – a poem, a chant, or instructive lists of random words that begin with each letter from Supernormal. Between numbers, film maker James Holcombe shows black and white films while illuminating the quirks of his vintage film equipment. The band are enhanced here by young Xena (vocals) and Hugo Holcombe (cello).

This year, Thomas plans to release six more live sets from other European gigs. There is also his new solo album *The House Rabbit Of Jesus Green* (said rabbit being a real Hackney resident). The album demonstrates Thomas's musical versatility, his skill as a guitarist and his determination "to resist habit and taste". He employs classic studio techniques of slowing down, reversing, pitch-sliding, distortion, delay and a whole gamut of audio computerology.

Part composition, part improvisation, the theme here, if there is one, is loads of space, long pauses, sparse electronic treatments, solo melodic riffs. Tunes flick dynamically between distorted rock guitar and the bleeps and ripples of Derbyshiresque radiophonics; from 1980s funk or ethereal wah-wah blues to rich orchestral strings.

There are hints of Steve Reich's insistent overlaid cross rhythms and a sustained shimmering of cymbals, as if walking through a hall of mirrors or a scene from Alain Resnais's *Last Year In Marienbad*. The recommended approach is to sit back and let this magical recording take you wherever it wants to.

Jo Hutton

Rishin Singh with Martin Sturm

Mewl Infans

Beacon Sound DL/LP

In the past, Rishin Singh has created works for solo piano, chamber orchestra, string quartet and vocal ensembles, all with an exquisite attention to the timbral qualities of each instrument, using resonant space as a canvas to bring forth shimmering microtonal minimalism.

During a performance of one of his choral pieces in Weimar, the Malaysian born, Berlin based composer met Martin Sturm, a professor of organ at the Franz Liszt University of Music. Sturm asked Singh if he would consider composing a piece for him, and Singh responded that first he would need to become better acquainted with the particularities of the pipe organ as an instrument.

This challenge inspired the two musicians to follow in Liszt's footsteps, embarking on their own "rural organ experiments" like the ones the Hungarian composer undertook with the cantor Alexander Wilhelm Gottschalg in the mid-19th century. Their investigation led them to the Liszt Organ in Denstedt, so called because it was often utilised by Lizst himself. Around a decade ago, this historic organ was fully restored and outfitted with a winddrossel – an electronic wind throttle which allows the user to modulate the supply of air blowing through the pipes, making possible an unexpected range of tunings and tones.

Through an openended compositional method that allows for ample interpretation from the organist, Singh and Sturm have co-created a work – achieved with the assistance of Jakob Dietz and Bogdan Reincke and recorded and mixed by Adam Asnan – that makes full use of the unique properties of this instrument, coaxing forth scintillating, fluid drones and stacking colourful cluster chords that fill the room with dense sonic shapes.

Sometimes these forceful blasts come to an abrupt end, revealing not silence but the perfumed hiss of wind still whipping through the massive metal pipes – ghosts in a very grand machine.

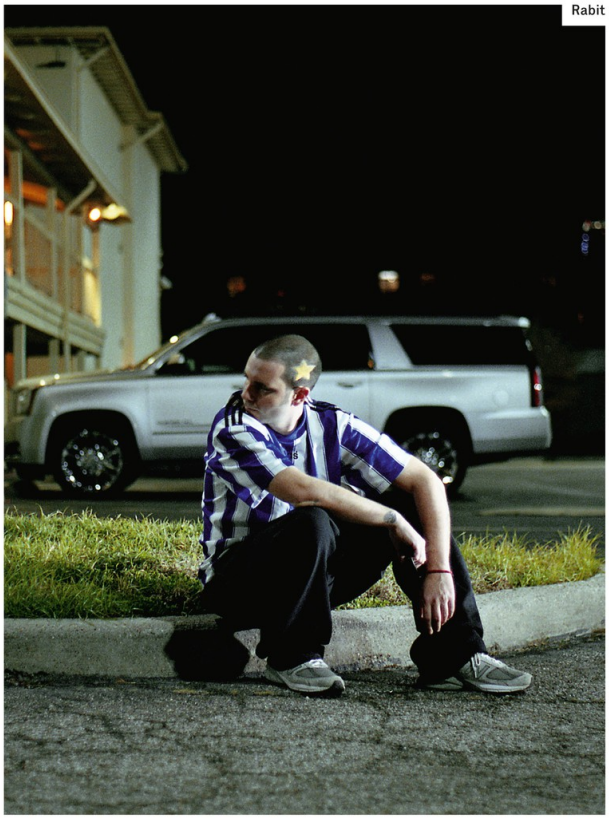
Emily Pothast

Richard Skelton

Shear Planes

Aeolian/Corbel Stone Press DL/MC

My geologist grandfather used to entertain us with (often scatological)



Rabit

Tony Krash

lessons on how the Scottish landscape was formed. Puffing clouds of Presbyterian Mixture from his pipe, he'd squat and groan as if straining to shit a narrow magma flow. One favourite was to lie on his back on a downslope and roar to dramatise basal shear stress, where glacial ice compounded by gravity and friction bears down overwhelming on the rocks below, deforming and metamorphosing them into the topographies we see today.

Shear stress = P x sin(A), where P is normal stress and A the angle of slope. Maybe some such formula governs this third geological episode in Richard Skelton's mighty *Moraine Sequence*. He has taken simple waveforms and subjected them to enormous deformatory pressures creating a music much darker, harsher and more threatening than previous works. Distinguished only by two enigmatic subtitles, "(<)" and "(.)", the two parts of *Shear Planes* sound as if they might well be governed by marginal but cumulative mathematical differences.

Geology is supposed to be frowningly indifferent to the deeds and misdeeds of its currently dominant squatters, but it's hard to listen to this music against a background of tanking economics, nuclear threat and political treachery and not hear it as a heaving jeremiad or stern warning. Skelton imposes no such programmes and attaches no superadded meanings, but sound art as concentrated as this is bound to gather up associations as it moves implacably along. It is a moraine sequence, after all, and it is in the fragmentary moraines deposited along the route of a glacier that one can read its history.

Musical interactions with nature are not to be treated lightly. The birds calling back to Eric Dolphy's dawn practice. The massive fall of rock on Orkney at the exact moment Peter Maxwell Davies wrote the last cadence of his symphony. A tiny earth tremor the morning I first played *Shear Planes*; nothing out of the ordinary here, and no more disturbing than the slam of a distant door, but a grumbled acknowledgement from the planet that great forces are gathering, in this music, as in the world.

Brian Morton

Strategy
Unexplained Sky Burners
Peak Oil DL/MC

Under the Strategy moniker, Portland's Paul Dickow has been cultivating an unmistakable yet protean sound since the early 2000s. At its most tangible, it's a latticework of disco, house, techno, dub and interstitial fusions layered into a radiant, kaleidoscopic bloom. Those genres are rarely absent, but alchemical transformation makes them slippery and surprising from one release to the next. In many ways *Unexplained Sky Burners* – his third release for Los Angeles imprint Peak Oil – is the most surprising to date.

It's definitely the most crisp, least diffuse, most unabashedly beats and breaks driven one I can think of. Where much of Dickow's discography sounds like a miraculous merger of disparate parties on opposite sides of a valley, this is squarely on the dancefloor in at least one. There's a meticulousness too – Dickow describes his methodology for "attempt(ing) to grapple with iconic samples" as an archaeological one. Take "Bassmaker", for example, with its prominent sample from Simon Harris's "Bass (How Low Can You Go)" which, in turn sampled Public Enemy's "Bring The Noise", inevitably leading to James Brown. There's an attentiveness to this endless unearthing that borders on spellbound.

Of course it's trafficking, to some degree, in rave nostalgia. In the UK, rave's heyday has become an uninspiring halcyon as, like punk before it, the once renegade scene assimilates into an establishment-friendly – even jingoistic – heritage narrative. Dickow eludes that baggage, not by virtue of non-Britishness, but by consistency. The object of nostalgia in his music was always a strange fugitive zephyr. It's not something that beckons you down memory lane, but into some other slipstream in the undercurrent of here and now, like a fresh dream that dissolves all the more rapidly for your attempt to remember it. Nevertheless, the chimerical charge of *Unexplained Sky Burners* is undiminished by the rigour of Dickow's approach.

James Gormley

Pat Thomas
Pat Thomas Plays The Duke
New Jazz And Improvised Music CD/DL
New Jazz Jungle: Remembering
Feedback Moves DL/2×LP
Forensic Trio
Heartless
Discus CD/DL

These releases show the remarkable range of Pat Thomas. *Plays The Duke* is at the jazz end of the pianist-composer's output, recorded live in 2021 at Newcastle's Festival of Jazz and Improvised Music. The reissued *New Jazz Jungle: Remembering* from 1997 is a unique synthesis of modern composition and dance genres. *Heartless* is austere but compelling free improv.

The last of these is territory listeners will be most familiar with, featuring Martin Archer (saxophones, laptop) and Jonny Hunter (percussion). All the music was improvised, apart from the coda of "Rotten Star", which is a collage, and the ethos is mostly sparse, featuring smaller sounds. For much of the album, Thomas plays piano inside and out simultaneously, while Hunter scratches and taps at a reduced kit plus small handheld instruments. Archer plays sopranino, alto and baritone saxophones without grandstanding. His sopranino on "Heartless, Heartless…/ Rotten State" – alternating parts of two longer improvisations – has a shrill immediacy. "Improvisation In Traditional Form", with its occasional bluesy hints, is a brief energetic interlude to the general entropy. Downbeat titles imply a dystopian release for our times.

Thomas has explained that at first, "I could play Duke Ellington [but] I was trying to develop my own language". But as a second or third generation free improvisor, he's increasingly advocated total genre freedom. On *Plays The Duke*, Ellington's classics are used as springboards for improvisation, rather than interpretation. Rather than improv on the changes, the results are more like an avant garde Art Tatum. Most tracks have explosions – hectic passages that remind me of Don Pullen's freer playing – but there's great tenderness in the presentation of "Prelude To A Kiss" and "Black Butterfly". "Drop Me Off In Harlem" must be the most iconoclastic version on record.

In Thomas's evolution *New Jazz Jungle* offers radical use of piano, synth, sampler and multitrack sequencing. He's explained how jungle was as much a shock as first hearing Derek Bailey and Evan Parker: "What I loved about those early jungle recordings was the openness to experimentation, [rejection of] conventional song form structure, and the use of extreme tempos and collage." Critical citations of Schoenberg and Webern seem to arise from parallels with their technique of klangfarbenmelodie (sound-colour melody).

The album features ten hypnotic tracks of spartan, ultra-low bass jungle breaks, intercut with vocal and orchestral samples, against frantic polymetric percussion. The stepper "One Nation" is replete with vocal samples and eerie theremin effects. On "Remembering", samples comment on clattering percussion and strings, while what sounds like jazz trumpet heralds the illbient jazz jungle fusion of "Who Are The Strangers". Three incisive releases by a powerful improvising and compositional presence.

Andy Hamilton

Thumbscrew
Multicolored Midnight
Cuneiform CD/DL/LP

In October 1959, the first Wes Montgomery Trio LP came out on Riverside. Jazz guitar was reinvented. The only problem was that the guys who were working with Montgomery, organist Mel Rhyne and drummer Paul Parker, didn't really know what was what and the *Dynamic New Sound* of the subtitle only really applied to the leader. The key to Thumbscrew is that it has always been a group of interdependent equals, each instrument and player contributing to a dazzling mix of neo-bop melody, octave sliding, and total, but never chaotic, freedom.

To be fair, this is the seventh album from guitarist Mary Halvorson, bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Tomas Fujiwara, and by the time Montgomery and his men had made that number, they were all on the same page, too. But the miracle of Thumbscrew is that, however accidental the group's origins were, they fell into place almost at once. Only a very old fashioned view of jazz privileges standards and repertory playing over original composition, but the acid test of Thumbscrew was the earlier Cuneiform pairing of *Ours* and *Theirs*, an album apiece of new tunes and versions of Benny Golson, Wayne Shorter and Misha Mengelberg tunes. With them, it became clear that Thumbscrew was a state of mind as much as a working band name.

It's evident here on the endless, reeling line of "I'm A Senator!" and the Zappa-like "Song For Mr Humphries", which sounds like the latter taking the piss out of jazz. "Fidgety", with its strange electronic parallel text, could almost be a futuristic version of a Montgomery idea, with wonky octaves and Halvorson's unmistakable twang. And yet, they wouldn't be the group they are without Fujiwara's ability to slide in and out of time at such a rate that the free stuff sounds metrical and the beats completely free, or indeed Formanek's formidable range. A clue to how Thumbscrew evolved can be found on the bassist's 1992 album *Loose Cannon*, with Tim Berne and Jeff Hirshfield, one of the best bass driven small groups of recent times and a perfect illustration of his intelligence and splintery musicality.

Thumbscrew are one of the essential contemporary jazz groups, and each of those last four words requires equal stress. They're an indivisible unit, permanently fresh and original, definitely playing jazz and not some genetically modified alternative, and definitely essential.

Brian Morton

Devin Townsend
Lightwork
InsideOut CD/2×CD/2×CD+Blu-ray/ DL/2×LP/3×LP+2×CD+Blu-ray

In *The Wire*'s recent feature on Canadian musician Devin Townsend, Joseph Stannard quoted Will Ballantyne (Anti-God Hand/City): "One of the things I love the most about Devin's music is when he swings towards beautiful, openhearted optimism." Rather than swinging towards it, however, Townsend's latest album *Lightwork* builds that optimism into hulking great towers of song.

Since the 2007 dissolution of his extreme metal outfit Strapping Young Lad, Townsend's solo career has evolved to incorporate elements of ambient, collage and electronic music. For *Lightwork* he hooked up with producer Garth 'GGGarth' Richardson, which required some relinquishing of control (Townsend usually produces himself) but which has resulted in a fresh, engaging collection.

The album is bookended with literal light work in the form of opener

Heroic trio: Mike Baggetta, Jim Keltner, Mike Watt

Mike Baggetta/Jim Keltner/Mike Watt
Everywhen We Go
Big Ego DL/LP

For guitarist Mike Baggetta, it was odd that bassist Mike Watt and drummer Jim Keltner had never played together – hence 2019's *Wall Of Flowers*. *Everywhen We Go* is the follow-up by this post-rock power trio of visionary inventiveness and creativity. The new album mostly stems from one day's recording in Long Beach, California with Chris Schlarb producing. Most compositions are by Baggetta, with one by Watt and two by the trio.

The digital files are branded Psychedelic Rock but Baggetta comments that categorisation depends on what background the listener comes from: "Someone from jazz might say jazz-avant-rock, someone from rock might say psychedelic-rock-avant. I prefer 'post-genre' – to the dismay of the press."

American punk pioneer Watt (Minutemen/fIREHOSE) is animated by the primal spirit of rock 'n' roll, but also inspired by Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders. He has self-belief but also artistic humility, and described being in a rhythm section with Jim Keltner on *Wall Of Flowers* as "total mindblow! He is the man with the beat in his hand." Keltner is interactive and inventive, but Watt's "service role" is no simple matter, Baggetta argues: "The way the groove holds together, the way it's interpreted from measure to measure – the bass player contributes mightily to that overall feel. There's not so much improvising by Watt as such, but on some of the improvised group pieces, he evolves what he's playing."

I've been mulling how, in the 1950s, rock 'n' roll's straight feel evolved from jazz swing – but Baggetta calls this a "surface level perception". More fundamentally, he argues, swing feel is an elasticity between bass and drums, contrasted with tight and rigid playing. Isn't the former more identified with jazz? "It's easy for people to think that," he responds. "But great bands of any genre have an interplay between bass and drums – a give and take of the beat, that living breathing elasticity. Then the idea of swing versus straight takes on a different meaning."

Baggetta is a player of immense subtlety across all dimensions, working with an impressive palette of tones. These are brought out by the detailed close-up mix, which gives an attractive homespun feel of a live jam in a small room. The opening title track, with its moody surf guitar, has a dark retro feel. "In The Center" draws on Ry Cooder's *Paris, Texas* style, with a shimmering effect, while the trio's improvised "This Is Not A Euphemism", a modal ostinato with a shuffle feel, is a dark masterpiece. The novel contemporary electric sound of Watt's "Yank It Out" showcases free playing from the chordal instruments. The guitarist's feedback-laden sound is freighted with the instrument's history, filtered through Robert Fripp, Allan Holdsworth, Fred Frith and Jerry Garcia.

"Not Enough Of Time" is a cousin of "In The Center" in recalling Cooder, this time distilling Fripp's loopscapes with hints of John Fahey and John Oswald. "Fake Break" begins with overdubbed acoustic guitars flipping from channel to channel, before Keltner's thunderous groove introduces powerful surf guitar. Layered guitar tracks are in overdubbed harmony with clean electric slide guitars, with a beautiful underlying acoustic sound. Baggetta's solo "A Measure Of A Life (Intro)" is a brief, plangent piece of Americana, in which FX are blended seamlessly into chordal acoustic guitar. The trio's improvised "Fearmongers" is an exploration in free tempo. "A Measure Of A Life" recalls a lugubrious, sentimental Irish air on electric guitar, and – surprisingly late in the album, especially given his own collaborations with Jim Keltner – carries the first hints of Bill Frisell.

Everywhen marks a real advance on *Wall Of Flowers*, partly no doubt through the trio's greater familiarity with each other. As the sleevenotes comment, in these dark days we need music like this to explore and get lost in. The trio's third album can't come soon enough.

Andy Hamilton

Devin O'Brien

"Moonpeople" and closer "Children Of God" which set distant foghorns adrift in a continuation of the sleeve's nautical imagery. Between them, these tracks illustrate the contrasting forms of euphoria summoned throughout: the former registers as a call to arms, Townsend's guitar chugging through bright cherubic synths; the latter deals in a more cosmic type of elation, moulding those silver-white textures into divine, detailed ambience. This divinity feels free from religious dogma. Indeed, Townsend could be considered a purveyor of humanist metal – delivering enlightenment through music that beams with universal empathy and love.

The album is accompanied by a bonus disc titled *Nightwork* which, Townsend recently admitted, contains some of his favourite moments from the project. Opening tracks "Starchasm Pt 2" and "Stampys Blaster" launch immediately into churning riffage, the freneticism of which continues throughout the disc, only interrupted by the Ween-like bounce of "Yogi" and the crystalline sparkle of "Precious Sardine" whose ornate, interlocking pieces glisten like fish scales. The bonus album serves as a more propulsive counterpart to the beatific radiance of *Lightwork*, balancing its soaring scale with pounding pummel.

Though Townsend constructs songs with the vastness of metal and the complexity of prog, much of his new material proceeds with the skyscraping swagger (if not the machismo) of pure, anthemic rock – tracks such as "Call Of The Void" and "Celestial Signals" feature massive, almost Def Leppard-esque hooks. While this melodicism is hardly a new development, it's the first time Townsend's music has been completely propelled by openhearted optimism, investing *Lightwork* with an almost spiritual intensity.

Spenser Tomson

The Columns

Avant Rock by Antonio Poscic

haphazardly assembled on a glitched out industrial production line. Squelching synth pads, bouncy kick drums, bits of squeaky chiptune, heavily processed voices and a myriad of other electronic effects are draped over stroboscopic structures and squashed into rhythmically tight figures. Despite its disarmingly naive facade, there's a compositional brilliance and sense of inspired spontaneity at work in this bonkers collage that, if you squint a bit, almost appears to be a pop album.

Bill Callahan
Reality
Drag City CD/DL/LP/MC

Old Fire
Voids
Western Vinyl CD/DL/2×LP

Bill Callahan's music has aged gracefully. Through marriage and fatherhood his perspective has mellowed from irony-laced weltschmerz to shy optimism and hope. It's fitting then for *Reality* to begin with him singing about birdsong waking up his family over a lush jazzy instrumental. Across the album woodwinds and brass establish the atmosphere, allowing Callahan to revisit some darker parts of himself with the safety of knowing that everything will be fine. He also appears on the new release from US composer John Mark Lapham's Old Fire project. *Voids* drifts elegantly through elegiac styles, anchored to mercurial moods and the inflections of the guest vocalists. There's dense triphop ("Blue Star" with Emily Cross), droning folk ("Corpus" with Callahan), grandiose rock ("Dreamless" with Adam Torres) and lounge jazz tinged ambient ("Window Without A World" featuring Julia Holter). "Void I" through "Void IV" turn the tables by embracing a Cuong Vu/Arve Henriksen-like brass heavy fabric, before dissipating into nothingness.

Dime Lifters
Love Corrupted
Tin Angel DL/12"

Dime Lifters' debut sees Kyle Knapp continuing the transformative journey he embarked on with Toronto art rockers Deliluh. Devoid of significant rhythmic motifs, *Love Corrupted* is all about moods of the synaesthetic noir kind, with Knapp and Andrew Matthews creating cinematic music that evokes the ennui of underground lounges. On opener "Aegean Face" urban field recordings oscillate into muted synth textures, disembodied voices, twinkling guitars and hazy saxophones. The rest follows a similar pattern with the duo crooning over abstract ambient, solid rock, wistful chansons and disquieting gothic country.

Macula Dog
Orange 2
Wharf Cat DL/LP

The second album by New York's Macula Dog sounds as though subject to a manufacturing error, as if its pieces were

Moonbears
Four Sides For Red
Bandcamp DL/LP

Coventry's Moonbears – Sarah Laughton, Michael Fitzgerald, Jon Webb and *Wire* contributor Neil Kulkarni – play a quirky take on psych folk and rock, balancing pop and prog sensibilities. But *Four Sides For Red* is special. Dedicated to Kulkarni's late wife Samantha Whateley (Red), it's a bittersweet embodiment of cherished memories and the acceptance of grief. Held together by a funky rhythm section, the music flows around Kulkarni's silky croon and Laughton's yearning, gorgeous saxophone/clarinet lines. Together these components merge into an idiosyncratic fusion of baroque rock and 1990s pop. Lovely stuff.

Rangers
Death Of Rangers (2009)
Bandcamp DL

After reviving his Texas one person unit Rangers with new material earlier this year, Joe Knight unearths two deep 2009 cuts. "Death Of Rangers" is cloudy and meandering as it sends dusky guitar riffs on a self-discovery trip through a barren desert, before finding its way back to a city soundscape lit by violet synthesizers, where a Fleetwood Mac tribute can be heard playing a nearby bar. "Life Of Rangers" goes for a smoother, slap bass driven Balearic fusion and 1980s pop aesthetic, then ends up in hazy shoegaze. The intimate lo-fi production further elevates this utterly immersive music, offering a peek into Knight's memories.

Thisquietarmy x Away
Machine Consciousness, Phase III
Consouling Sounds CD/DL/LP

For the past 15 years Canadian musician Eric Quach has been forging vast guitar and electronics drones. This record is the third in a series of collaborations with Voivod drummer Michel Langevin. The combination of Quach's shimmering textures and brass overdubs with Langevin's deft drumming infuses this inherently atmospheric music with an unexpected kineticism. At certain points, the duo's arrhythmic synth fragments and softly brushed pulses intersect in hypnotic post-metal crescendos. At others, they let themselves loose and freewheel into avant noise rock in the vein of Merzbow/Keiji Haino/Balázs Pándi. Put plainly, this is a banger. ☐

Critical Beats by Yewande Adeniran

Actress
Dummy Corporation
Ninja Tune DL

Actress makes his highly anticipated return with a new EP featuring four brand new tracks and a couple of edits. The opening "Dummy Corporation" drifts ominously over its almost 20 minute duration, guided by swaying synths and a looping beat. "Futur Spher Techno Version" is neoclassical dance, hauntingly sad but compelling nevertheless. "Fragments Of A Butterfly's Face" is considerably more optimistic sounding, striking a balance between the familiarity of its 4/4 kick and hypnotic melodies, pushing listener expectation with its immersive sound design. But "Dream" is techno at its core, its powerhouse vocals, Detroit style synths and drums adding up to a superlative club track. It's great to have him back.

Lady Lykez
Woza
Hyperdub DL

Lady Lykez teams up with Scratchclart for her second EP on Hyperdub, and it's high octane throughout. The title track featuring South African MC Toya Delazy provides a suitably dramatic beginning. The more stripped down dancehall banger "Pull Down" challenges the listener to sit still – Lykez's tongue in cheek lyrics are pushed to the forefront here. Featuring additional production from DJ Polo, "Bully Dem" showcases the hybrid gqom/amapiano, London meets South Africa sound that's gathered dancefloor traction of late. To close out, Lykez and Trim lock horns on "Shapez" – grime in energy and funky in delivery, it allows us to delve into Lykez's inner workings.

Honey Dijon
Black Girl Magic
Classic Music Company DL/3×LP

Black Girl Magic is Honey Dijon's most personal work to date. Over 15 tracks, Dijon collaborates with notable guests like Josh Caffe, Hadiya George, EVE, Mike Dunn and Channel Tres. The energy here is infectious. There's a certain magic when you hear Dijon's productions – it's impossible to ignore the sheer depth of influences within her sound, as demonstrated by the 2000s style jazz inflected number "It's Quiet Now" featuring Dope Earth Alien, and Cor.Ece's emotional vocal on the pensive "Stand". Favourite track: "Downtown" whose *"This is a party, spread the news"* refrain could provide the tagline for any Dijon release.

Jabes
Ripples/Body Said No
Timedance DL/12"

Headed up by UK techno superstar Batu, Bristol's Timedance delves further into esoteric sound here with London based producer Jabes, a master of sound design and mindbending sonics. This release packs a lot into two tracks. "Ripples" has one of the most satisfying continuous build-ups I've heard in a while, echoing the feeling of a 2am drop when your jaw is about to go, Jabes commandeering the cosmic ether with the entire dancefloor marching to his drum. "Body Said No" builds pathways to another dimension. Portals are opened, swiftly closed and reopened again. One for the heads.

Sputnik One
Supa Natural/Grafters
N-Face DL/12"

Having already featured on compilations from Parisian Label Grid and Bristol's Pressure Dome plus a stellar release on the Wisdom Teeth label, there was little doubt that Sputnik One's inaugural release on his own imprint N-Face was going to be a corker. Lead track "Supa Natural" with Belfast MC Emby has been doing the rounds across the summer. Emby's lyrical smoothness effortlessly glides over Sputnik's low swinging production. On the flip "Grafters" offers more of his usual sound, with a nod towards 2010s Hessle Audio. To top it all off, there's a spooky emotional breakbeat remix of "Supa Natural" from Honeydrip & Spud who take the hype energy of the original and give it the hardcore treatment. If you're interested in hearing more from that duo, their HÖR set from September is recommended.

Slacker
Damage To Be Undone
Soft Raw DL

Here's another new imprint, this one from Bristol based DJ Danielle. Already known for her NTS underground dance music showcase, it's no surprise that her label's first release is full of big shellers, courtesy of Slacker from London based Pseudonym Records. Opener "Damage To Be Undone" is a raw and intense peak time destroyer, revealing the artist's darker side. Building momentum, "Lay It Bare" is angular sliced drum 'n' bass with icy grime 3.0 synths, while "Slither" is a deeper breaks track. The B side's "Dulled Voice Of Anger" pairs cinematic moodiness with a post-jungle approach, deploying an array of soundscapes and careful sound design to keep the listener hooked throughout. The beautiful closer "Turning Stone Into Symbol" gives us a welcome respite from the intensity. Without giving away too much, this release is a contender for one of the year's best. ☐

Dub & Reggae by Steve Barker

manager for Tuff Gong, she recruited the great Sharon Forrester on vocals for a timeless version of Rose Royce's 1978 classic, which by any definition is one of the greatest reggae soul covers ever. Indeed, it's a lovers rock classic albeit one made in Kingston. Ellis drafted in Boris Gardiner for the arrangement, recorded at Herman Chin Loy's Aquarius. Check the glory of the full extended discomix – for the first time out on 12" since its original outing.

Al Cisneros x The Bug
Rosin
Pressure DL/12"
The friendship between Al Cisneros of stoner rock/doom metal outfits Sleep and OM and Kevin 'The Bug' Martin stretches back to a 2012 gig at London's Scala Cinema, when they found a mutual interest in the deepest of riddim, dub and roots. What followed over the years was Martin supporting OM at European venues, and a resolution from Al Cisneros to record for the Pressure label. Here's the result: two rebel dubsters sharing a four track 12". It's a version to version sequence with Cisneros perversely providing the more orthodox tracks on the acoustically heavy "Rosin Immersion", which is lightened only slightly with melodica lines, and the wittily titled "Dabby You", which spaces out and dubs the melodica. On the flip Martin industrialises the mixes into a fuzzed drama on "Fathoms", while the noise weighs heaviest on "50Hz", where the rhythm remains incessant. A limited edition coloured vinyl 12" version is coming mastered by Stefan 'Pole' Betke.

Eek-A-Mouse
Wa-Do-Dem
Greensleeves LP
Before he rechristened himself Eek-A-Mouse after a race horse he bet on frequently even though it usually lost, one of Jamaica's most beloved deejays released a few creditable roots tunes in the mid-1970s under his birth name Ripton Hilton. As Eek-A-Mouse he cut his second set in 1981 for Henry 'Junjo' Lawes at Volcano. Recorded with The Roots Radics at their most commanding at Channel One, and mixed at Tubbys by Barnabas, Scientist and Jammy, the tracks showcased his innovative, high nasal sing-jay style, unique among the deejay crowd, insinuating itself into the riddim while assuming an almost instrumental quality. He overcame accusations of being a novelty through the quality of his tunes along with some socially conscious themes. The opening three tracks of this set are stone classics: "Ganja Smuggling", "Long Time Ago" and "Operation Eradication".

Sharon Forrester
Love Don't Live Here Anymore/Version
Freestyle DL/12"
Produced by Diane Ellis for her own Dice label in 1979 when she was studio

Boris Gardiner
Ultra Super Dub Vol 1
Now-Again LP
Although he played bass for The Upsetters, The Supersonics and The Aggrovators at Studio One and in many other settings, Boris Gardiner is perhaps best known, especially outside reggae circles, for *Every N****r Is A Star*, his 1973 soundtrack album which was subsequently ravaged by hiphop, famously sampled by Kendrick Lamar and used as the introduction to the film *Moonlight*. There were also two albums credited to The Boris Gardiner Happening, *Ultra Super Dub Vols 1* and *2*, which were so obscure that for many years Gardiner was unaware of their existence! Following Jamaican precedent, the Miami based Alty East's Ultra Records had taken a series of instrumentals Gardiner had created on 45s and issued the dubbed out originals – mainly Jamaican renditions of songs by Otis Redding, Clarence Carter, Betty Wright and Jimmy 'Bo' Horne – in an extremely small edition. Here's Now-Again's reissue of volume one. As might be expected, a super tight session band run through these tracks, and in the mix we pick up shades of Jamaica's dubmasters, the highlight being "Rider Roots", where echoes of The Observer's way with a pumping horn section steal the show.

Georges/More Relation
The Light/Blacker Dub
Roots Vibration 7"
More Relation became a band in 1977 in New York, featuring Isaac James, Delroy Campbell, George 'Pampas' Ricketts and Howard Ottey mainly acting as a back-up unit for visiting reggae artists such as The Melodians, Larry Marshall, Ken Booth, Slickers and more. They participated in the New York Reggae Festival in 1978 and went on to cut their first album the same year, producing two hit singles locally, "Solve Them" and "Jehoveah's Kingdom". This original release was credited to Georges on the A side at the last minute because one of the four band members missed the session. The dub, however, was still credited to More Relation. The tune has a Bob Marley-esque vocal with a melody and delivery not unlike The Wailers' "No Woman, No Cry". Together with its lovely, loping dub, this 7" stands out as premium US reggae. The self-titled album should be released in 2023. ☐

Electronics by Sam Davies

Egg Meat
Egg Meat
Alien Jams DL/MC
Egg Meat are the London based duo of Laurel Uziell and Georgie McVicar, who also record as Tooth Rust. But, somewhat ambiguously, the voice and words on all five tracks here are those of poet Danny Hayward. Indeed he takes a major role, because although it's often cut-up, smashed, refracted and scattered through the mix, the human ear can't help but pick out the human voice from the angular, off-centre rhythms and electronics tumbling around it. *Egg Meat* is generally uneasy listening, but compellingly so, and while always cryptic in the way the music disassembles and garbles Hayward's lines, it feels like part of a messy lineage of hide and seek, show and tell confessionals traceable through acts like Kevin Blechdom or the Riot Grrrl-adjacent spoken word of Blood Sausage.

Ilha
Lava Around The Floating Island
Ransom Note DL
The debut EP from a duo formed by Canadian producer African Ghost Company and Mozambican artist Nandele, *Lava Around The Floating Island* riffs satisfyingly enough on particular strands of synth. "MA118" mines the remorseless chug of a John Carpenter score. "Seawall" lays out long, new age meditation tape arpeggios. "Dirl" eventually settles into a dense earworm of cosmic acid house squiggle and stuttering kicks. In short, Ilha are audibly weighing up promising potential directions.

Lotus Eater
Plasma
Stroboscopic Artefacts DL/LP
This second album by the duo of techno producers Luca Mortellaro (Lucy) and Seth Horvitz (Rrose, Sutekh) isn't exactly minimal techno, even if its reductionism and micro-plotted grids are audible in *Plasma*'s underlying grammar. Instead this is sound design as slowest of slow burns, generally sparked by a single atom of sound that steadily accretes other scraps of texture around their gravitational pull and pulse. Rough edges repeat in place of any obvious percussion. Like watching a lit but infinitely long fuse, Lotus Eater's tracks smoulder but never explode, and the effect is at once suspenseful and subtly sinister.

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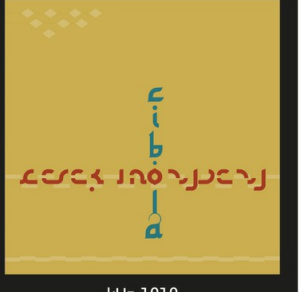

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Jake Muir & Evan Caminiti
Talisman
Dust Editions DL/LP
Talisman is a solo-not-solo guitar record of ambient-not-ambient music, in which Los Angeles based Evan Caminiti's playing unwinds slow free associations on the American desert. Sound engineer Jake Muir responds by filtering and transmuting his guitar echoes, coaxing out swells and surges of tone, like some sentient effects pedal. I'd like to know if the processing was done after the fact or fed back to Caminiti to respond to in his playing. It feels self-consciously cinematic: widescreen, textural, and you can hear traces of various soundtracks that responded to the same panoramas: Neil Young's *Dead Man*, Ry Cooder's *Paris, Texas*, Sonic Youth's *Made In USA*. But *Talisman* has a sinuous depth of its own, as Muir melts Caminiti's guitar into a slow, liquid opalescence.

The Night Monitor
Perception Report 4
Fonolith DL
Phono Ghosts
Quicksilver Incantation
Future Massive DL/LP
Two more entries to expand Blackpool musician Neil Scrivin's extended universe. Phono Ghosts' *Quicksilver Incantation* is the more straightforward, with Scrivin using broad brush synths, beats and vocals to paint full colour recreations of a 1980s pop that never quite existed – as if Boards Of Canada had gone through a long phase of listening to Roxy Music's *Avalon* and ABC's *The Lexicon Of Love*, maybe even some Gerry Rafferty. *The Night Monitor* meanwhile is Scrivin's channel for purely Fortean tunes, a series of releases "soundtracking unexplained phenomena". The pick of *Perception Report 4* is "Owlman Of Mawnan", each element of which shakes and warbles as though mixed down from a decrepit (OK, haunted) Tascam four-track.

Pale Sketcher
Golden Skin
Give/Take CD/DL/LP
Golden Skin has a long back story, as an offshoot of Jesu's 2007 album *Pale Sketches*, originally planned for release on Aphex Twin's Rephlex label, before it ceased operations. The line is that Justin Broadrick, in his gradual move from heaviosity (Napalm Death, Godflesh) towards a lighter, more washed out sound (Jesu) had reached such a level of reductionist gauziness that yet another alter ego was required. Heard at this distance *Golden Skin* is a lost avant pop classic rather than a barely there tissue of textures. Tracks like "Today" or "Have Faith" pull a similar trick to Third Eye Foundation's *Semtex*, blending chorales of shoegaze melody with late 1990s breaks as if losing patience with Kevin Shields's infamous inability to get around to it himself. "Rollercoaster" meanwhile is to Kanye West's chipmunk soul productions as the *Crazy Wisdom Masters* are to The Jungle Brothers.

Ripatti Deluxe
Speed Demon
Rajaton DL/LP/MC
Born out of the enforced slowdown of Covid and life in a farming village, this latest pen name for Vladislav Delay is – on the formal level – an exploration of speed, and the ecstatically hyperactive bpms of early rave and happy hardcore. On the conceptual and emotional level though it's surprisingly heavy, as its manic garbling of old rave shapes both throws up the past and accelerates the listener hectically into the future. The rapid-fire turnover of old styles points up the way fifth gear tempos burn out into slower scenes, whether it be speed garage subsiding into UKG, or even, on "Speed Breathe", early 80s thrash metal smouldering out. But, above all, the sense of memory, time and, with it, life, pouring torrentially through one's fingers is unmissable.

rRoxymore
Perpetual Now
Smalltown Supersound DL/LP
The sound of Berlin based rRoxymore's second album *Perpetual Now* has tangential relationships to house, techno, dub, ambient and psychedelic minimalism, but manages to plot a coherent and personal path between them all, with each of its four long tracks given space to breathe and expand. Case in point, "Sun In C", which settles into some trippy, Fourth World tintinnabulations, all dancing pointillist dots of tone, which give way to a burnished drone of sax, which eddies around itself, circular breathing style, before reaching a sunrise crescendo and subsiding back to the pattering polyrhythms. Or "Fragmented Dreams", which mutates a relentless tribal rhythm across a slow, unpredictable arc.

Laila Sakini & Lucy Van
Figures
Boomkat Editions DL/LP
This is an expanded reissue of a tape made in 2017, which itself came out of Laila Sakini working with poet Lucy Van at a noise/spoken word night in Naarm, Australia. Sakini provides low key beats and tones around Van's carefully affectless delivery, with inconsistent results. At times Sakini seems to be leaving a space for Van's voice, which itself is pitched at a level of deadpan absence, invariably adding up to less than the sum of its parts: *"Listen, can you tell me what you need, every day?/I mean, tell me every day what you need?/Oh, I don't give a fuck"*. The more assertive Sakini's beats become, though, the better Van's delivery works, as with the grubby post-punk rhythm of "False Ceiling" or the coiled, boa constrictor bassline of the title track. □

Global by **Francis Gooding**

Amapiano Now!
Various
NTS DL/2×LP
Much of the amapiano that has arrived on physical formats thus far has been somewhat leftfield – Awesome Tapes, for instance, dropped some bangers, but they haven't been entirely representative of this piano driven South African house sound's popular centre of gravity. NTS's benchmark collection, now available on vinyl after a digital issue last year, documents somewhat more mainstream amapiano sonics from artists across the genre, but it's still weighted toward the underground end of things. Deep blue night moves abound across 17 tracks from established acts and relative newcomers, Kamo Mphela, Vigro Deep and Unlimited Soul among them, all played out within the amapiano blueprint of plush-soft sub kicks, bowstring-tense percussion and oscillating keyboard worries.

Anime & Manga Synth Pop Soundtracks 1984–1990
Various
Time Capsule LP
Unlike other soundtracks, most of the music here was composed to accompany Japanese manga comics rather than anime films. Rather like the occasional record made to accompany a painting, novel, or imaginary film, this is music for the silent, static world of the page, then. This is visionary music for images that move only in the mind of the listener: synthetic soundtracks to interior, user-generated filmscapes by the likes of Kazuhiko Izu, Kan Ogasawara and Keiichi Oku.

Ustad Noor Bakhsh
Jingul
Honiuhoni DL
The album title *Jingul* is the Balochi name for the house sparrow – the title was chosen by octogenarian Ustad Noor Bakhsh for his first ever recordings, as the chattering, gregarious birds frequent his house. Bakhsh hails from the Makran coast in Pakistan's Balochistan province, and the instrument he plays is an electrified key-operated zither known as a benju, adapted from a novel early 20th century Japanese instrument known as a taishōkoto. Bakhsh has long been locally revered, but these are the first recordings he has ever made, and they are both light and quick, in the very best sense of those words. Accompanied by two dambooras swinging hard in 6/8, he delivers effervescent Balochi folklore bursting with life, his quicksilver fingers delivering ornamentation and melody as bustling and lively as the album's namesake bird.

DJ Scriby/DJ MaRii0/DJ Skothan
The Gqom Trilogy
Hakuna Kulala DL/3×LP
Merciless head crackers by the dozen: a triple pack of new school gqom steppers, grizzled and snapping, delivered via the reliably freaky Hakuna Kalula. DJ Skothan (better known as DJ Scoturn) is one of Durban's original gqom and house innovators, known for his work with Phelimuncasi among others; DJ Scriby has been making waves in South Africa and abroad for the last decade, while remaining a key figure in Durban; MaRii0 is a new face whose tracks push the gqom envelope until it splits. They get one record each, and there's no messing about. Skothan rides Mechagodzilla stomp to the darkside on "Congo Dance", and engages the wobbleboard to enter the far nebulae of "Qhafaza"; Scriby hoovers up on opener "Goi", and bids the spirit of Hypnotize Minds perform unholy tasks on "Friday 13th"; third of the trio MaRii0 leaves everything in tatters, typical gqom structures convulsed, and every track strobing with barely contained chaos.

Liraz
Roya
Glitterbeat DL/CD/LP
Risky recordings from Iranian-Israeli singer Liraz who put much of *Roya* to tape secretly in Istanbul with a mixed group of Israeli and Iranian musicians, the latter of whom were risking a great deal just by playing on the record, since contact between Iranians and Israelis is forbidden by the Iranian government. The music swings back toward the pre-revolution era of Iranian rock and soul via the currently ubiquitous Anadolu rock sound, but supercharges both with an uptempo studio pop sensibility; the songs tell of heartache, both political and personal, with a timely feminist twist.

Padang Moonrise: The Birth Of The Modern Indonesian Music Industry 1955–1969
Various
Soundway DL/CD/2×LP
For political reasons, postcolonial governments often attempted to turn audiences and musicians away from Euro-American pop and toward indigenous music – it often had the unintended consequence of an even deeper integration of the two, as musicians worked to accommodate traditional idioms within the modernist pop desires that were everywhere also cognate with liberation from colonialism. Sukarno, Indonesia's first president after independence, had condemned Western pop as a cultural irritant; meanwhile, audiences, musicians and label owners were busily getting

round official edicts by folding the global sounds of jazz, mambo, pop and rock into a mixture of Chinese, Malay, Middle Eastern, Dutch and local Indonesian folk and classical sounds, and pumping out thousands of records. The fragments of this deep syncretism collected here are spellbinding: mambos played on minor-key gamelan scales, classical Indonesian songs refigured as 1950s hotel lounge crooning, and Sundanese folklore refracted through smoky jazz ballads.

Síntesis Moderna: An Alternative Vision Of Argentinian Music 1980–1990
Various
Soundway DL/CD/2×LP
Does every local scene have to be dug up and sold? Must experimental Argentinian synth boingers and plastic avant boogie be fracked out of every Buenos Aires junk shop and repackaged? I guess so. And so to *Síntesis Moderna*, which drills down into the weirder end of Argentina's post-Junta free pop explosion and finds, predictably, a wealth of wonderful strangeness: power pop jams with disagreeable creep vocals, seasick smooth workouts, unsexy proto-rap and all kinds of banana in the tail pipe funk mishaps.

M Takara & Carla Boregas
Grande Massa D'Agua
Hivemind DL/LP
Experimental jazz explorations from the São Paulo undergound courtesy of drummer and percussionist Mauricio Takara, alongside Carla Boregas on keys and electronics. As the title suggests, *Grade Massa D'Agua* has a watery theme, opening with a downpour of pots, pans and circuitry on "Desenho #7", before settling into the groove of "Aurinho", Takara setting up a tumbling channel of percussion for Boregas to flow through on synths and electronics. The drummer has worked regularly with Rob Mazurek and other Chicago heads, and the sound is not far from some of the material presented by International Anthem: imagine the last couple of Carlos Niño records, but more brooding, purposeful and direct.

Vieux Farka Touré & Khruangbin
Ali
Dead Oceans DL/CD/LP
Malian singer and guitarist Touré is a master musician more than capable of slotting in with any context, but there is a genuine synergy here. Khruangbin have crafted oneiric Manding inflected backdrops as though they have found what they were looking for all along, and Touré settles into them like he's just got home. The album's a tribute to his father Ali, the songs all taken from the latter's catalogue. But the treatments are strikingly different to the originals, opener "Savanne" being a perfect example: where the original is fiercely parched and crackling, it appears here as watchful Sahelian reggae, drifting off dubwise into narcotised long haul desynchrony. ☐

Hiphop & R&B by Mosi Reeves

Contour
Onwards!
Touching Bass DL/LP
Khari 'Contour' Lucas is a self-described hyphenate whose work spans jazz-inflected soul and topical, Black-centred poetry. This album takes inspiration from LA Rebellion, an enclave of film directors at UCLA who sought to document Black life untainted by Hollywood gloss. "Pack Light" opens with a snippet of Danny Glover's performance from Charles Burnett's *To Sleep With Anger*. Contour identifies numerous ills in an evocative, unadorned voice, and sings on "Babe Brother" how *"Masculine history should afford/Better options"*. The tone can get deadly serious, but he finds room for light on "Repossess", a track with rising Philadelphia rapper Semiratruth.

Fatboi Sharif & Noface
Preaching In Havana
PTP DL/MC
The best thing about New Jersey rapper Fatboi Sharif is his voice: a deep baritone utilised to messy and disorienting effect. It helps him conjure *Preaching In Havana* with producer Noface, evoking late night smoke sessions in unlit rooms as bizarre horror films drone away on a VCR. Still, his broken verse dystopia could be more propulsive, even if this is music where hooks aren't necessarily a requirement. Highlights include "1999 Hacker Worldwide" and "5G Celsius Cell Tower".

L'Orange & Solemn Brigham
Marlowe 3
Mello Music Group CD/DL/LP
Nearly a decade after joining Mello Music Group, it's probably unfair to talk about L'Orange in terms of his influences. The North Carolina producer has developed a style that's uniquely decorative, full of psych tones and kooky samples, without losing a sense of bassy rhythm. Meanwhile, Solemn Brigham plays point guard on their *Marlowe* project, sprinkling the beats with allusions to his past street life and naked ambitions for his rap career. Some will dismiss *Marlowe 3* out of hand because, hey, it's indie rap, and who likes that stuff anymore? But they shouldn't.

Mavi
Laughing So Hard It Hurts
Mavi 4 Mayor DL
"Why does the world make me feel stupid/ Whenever I feel human?" raps Mavi on "The Inconvenient Truth". The North Carolina artist has a knack for writing lines that jump out at you, which is why a buzz has steadily fomented around him since his 2019 album *Let The Sun Talk*. On *Laughing So Hard It Hurts*, he raps as if he's turning pages in a chapbook, but he sounds as if he's simply expunging ideas instead of drifting into solipsism. Meanwhile, the soulful sound is reminiscent of Noname's *Room 25*, minus her distinctive vocal fry.

RAP Ferreira
5 To The Eye With Stars
Ruby Yacht DL
On this 23 minute affair, Maine's RAP Ferreira is in a prickly mood. *"Who made that first million/Pushing cassettes in the new millennium?"* he asks on "Fighting Back" before taking unexpected offence at Edan's 2002 single "Emcees Smoke Crack". The maverick artist quotes from Guru of Gang Starr, MF Doom and Arrested Development. He also says he *"invented this style"*, which is true, and he compares his manic state to Charles Mingus's frenzied breakdowns. *"We're the new Last Poets"* he ends on "Boot Knife". Ferreira is a true poet, and his lyrical aggression is thrilling here. He follows his whims where they lead, and it's understandable if he doesn't extend that courtesy to others.

Subjxct 5 & Wiki
Cold Cuts
Wikset Enterprises CD/DL
Cold Cuts is a collaboration between Brooklyn rapper Wiki and rising Jersey club producer Subjxct 5. Although Wiki is only 29 – he originally emerged with the late Ratking when he was a teenager, a history he addresses on "Come Home" – he seems to be in a mentoring role here, giving shine to New York prospects like Reed & Hunnaloe and Papo2oo4. That's the second half of this album; the first half finds him contrarily stuffing Subjxct 5's melodic edits – reminiscent of Prefuse 73 and AraabMuzik – with heavily accented meditations on city life. *"Type of kid that spit over the whole song"*, he raps on "Jersey Sub".

Joyce Wrice
Motive EP
Joyce Wrice Music DL
Los Angeles artist Joyce Wrice makes contemporary R&B during a time when that genre is marginalised in the pop market. That approach has made her something of a cult act, especially since she still releases music independently – her theme song for Disney's *The Proud Family* notwithstanding. On *Motive* she distils her Brandy-like delivery and lovelorn lyricism into five tracks, two of which are very good. On "Iced Tea", she floats over Kaytranada's midtempo house groove with jazzy nu-funk inflections, while "Pace Yourself" finds her instructing her date to not get too excited. *"I'll take you to the promised land"*, she sings coquettishly. ☐

Jazz & Improv by Daniel Spicer

Brackenbury Bianco
Wayward Mystic
Discus CD/DL
UK based American drummer Tony Bianco is probably best known for playing extensively with saxophonist Paul Dunmall, but his incredibly detailed and expressive roll and tumble remains undersung. In these duets with violin/viola player Faith Brackenbury, there's still plenty of free jazz fire, with rattling snare and cymbals sparring with strings like Rashied Ali and Didier Lockwood going head to head. But the album mainly focuses on gorgeous improvised devotions inspired by the music of 12th century German Christian mystic Hildegard von Bingen. These adopt a more meditative tone, as Bianco softly patters the toms with a tabla-like delicacy while Brackenbury employs overdubs to layer plangent vocals, swelling drones and heart-bursting lyrical lines.

Olie Brice Trio/Octet
Fire Hills
West Hill 2×CD/DL
During the 2021 lockdowns, bassist Olie Brice transcribed Julius Hemphill, studied Eric Dolphy and joined the dots between the polyphonic writings of 15th century composer Guillaume Du Fay and 20th century avant gardist Luigi Nono. His new album also nods to his abiding love for Sonny Rollins's early 1960s quartet: no matter how far out he goes, there's always a discernible sense of deep internal swing. The shorter pieces for trio ping with taut energy while the octet numbers reveal a generous palette, thoughtfully daubed. Two versions of the flagship title track – one from each configuration, both lasting 16 minutes – amply demonstrate how a rigorous conceptual framework can also be an adventurous playground for joyful expression.

Sarah Buechi/Franz Hellmüller/Rafael Jerjen
Moon Trail
Intakt CD/DL
If your idea of purgatory includes the sound of a contemporary jazz singer indulging in overemotive pleading with a side order of vocal fry, then Swiss vocalist Sarah Buechli's earnest delivery might, at first, be something to avoid. Listen a little deeper, however, and you may be intrigued by her embellishments – moans, hiccups, trills and whimpers that nudge her off the middle of the road. Guitarist Franz

Hellmüller and bassist Rafael Jerjen's sparsely precise accompaniment ranges from clipped blues funk to more abstract shimmers, all quite tastefully arranged. A barely-there take on the traditional folk tune "Le Vieux Chale" is most rewarding, with Buechli lingering sensuously on each syllable among glistening guitar filaments.

Edrix Puzzle
Coming Of The Moon Dogs
On The Corner DL/LP
Edrix Puzzle is the latest chapter in percussionist/producer Nathan Curran's Zeuhl-like space saga, initiated in 2020 with *Trans-Neptunia* by his Planet Battagon project, which imagines intergalactic sounds composed for Imperial Lord Battagon. If the far reaches of the cosmos sound like a night out in Hackney after an afternoon crate-digging in Soho, it's bang on. The obvious reference is Mwandishi-era Herbie Hancock: deep, heavily percussive vamps, driven by the mighty heft of Tom Mason's double bass and festooned with Patrick Gleeson-style analogue electronics. But there's a lot else going on, not least in "V11", which attempts a dubwise reimagining of Zappa's "Willie The Pimp". In space no one can hear you groove.

Mark Hanslip & Andrew Cheetham
String And Grid
Discus CD/DL
Here's what we need in these combative times: two of the most affable chaps associated with the North West English scene engaging in some good natured tenor and drums argy-bargy. Drummer Cheetham keeps up a rapid yet controlled barrage, skilfully chucking in blurred tom rolls, nippy rim shots and emphatic kick punctuations without losing his train of thought. Saxophonist/flautist Hanslip comes in tentative at first, offering guarded snippets before becoming more opinionated, garrulous even. After a short break, Hanslip takes a different tack, issuing broad multiphonic statements that brook no dissent. But Cheetham's having none of it and keeps up his chipper commentary. Later, over a couple of pints, they have a jolly good chuckle about it.

Leverton Fox
In The Flicker
Not Applicable CD/DL
When we look back at the geology of 21st century music, we'll see a thin seam indicating albums recorded in the gaps between Covid peaks. Here's one that succeeds in evoking and celebrating the strange joy of being allowed outside. In September 2020, the London based electronic improvising trio of Alex Bonney, Tim Giles and Sam Britton pitched up in Sussex woodland, set up ambient mics and recorded this 40 minute suite, melding analogue synths, drum machines and pocket trumpet with the sounds of twittering birds and rustling leaves. It's an immersive investigation into our relationship with nature, summoning owl hoots, whale song, alpine herds, the gentle lapping of waves, and conveying a gentle, grateful awe.

William Parker
Universal Tonality
Centering 2×CD/DL
Never let it be said that William Parker doesn't dream big. Here, he convenes a 17-piece ensemble to enact and embody his concept of Universal Tonality: a vision of humanity healed through music, basking in love and dwelling in a fraternal global utopia. To do so, he employs bass, drums, reeds, brass, piano, guitar, violins and vocals as well as the Korean komungo, Japanese koto, West African balafon and a South American double-reeded chirimía. There are, of course, deep grooves generated by Parker's elemental basslines but also huge, billowing freeform interludes reminiscent of Sun Ra's conducted improvisations. *"Hope is relentless"*, sings Leena Conquest. Hearing this joyful noise, it's not hard to believe her.

Chad Taylor Trio
The Reel
Astral Spirits CD/DL
This second album by Arizona born drummer Chad Taylor's trio with pianist Neil Podgurski and saxophonist Brian Settles features two Andrew Hill compositions – a spirited gallop through "Subterfuge" and a louche stroll around "Reconciliation". They also serve as good reference points for the originals contained herein: cerebral yet playful, sophisticated yet accessible. Throughout, Taylor demonstrates the effortless versatility that's made him such an in-demand player across multiple scenes. His tune "Julian's Groove" is a Latin prance underpinned by his metronomic rim clicks. On Settles's "Moon Tone Shift" he plays free, building densely dramatic colouration of powerful rolls and cymbal crashes. On Podgurski's "Nebula" – a showcase for its composer's terse agility at the keys – he slides around the tempo with an assured fluidity.

Mark Wastell
Cello-intern Solos
Confront CD/DL
Since February this year, Mark Wastell has held down a residency at London's Hundred Years Gallery, playing solo cello for an hour on the first Saturday of each month. It's not a gig as such. He plays while various other things are happening in the space and, in these recordings, you can hear occasional footsteps and voices in the background. Such is the intensity of his praxis, however, it's likely he didn't notice at the time. Concentrating solely on bowing, he generates a rich panoply of sounds, from pained shrieks and menacing growls to high, translucent harmonics and pursed whistles. It's the sound of a fierce commitment put into action. ☐

Noise, Industrial & Beyond by Raymond Cummings

Lee Counts
Lee Counts
workingman laydown DL/MC
This self-titled tape from North Carolina's Lee Counts evinces a distracted physicality. The A side figuratively heaps sheet metal ripples, rickety creaks and sword sharpenings until it's almost impossible to know which way is up. It sounds like an average afternoon at the junkyard, cannily mixed for maximum stereo impact. Meanwhile, the B side at first whirls like a flock of wild tornados or sentient unmoored centrifuges separating and colliding, with fierce dental drill tones whirring at every core. Later, Counts shifts gear into more relatively contemplative modes and moods, but you'll still need a reflective hard hat to survive them.

The Floating Mountain Band
Trails
Feeding Tube DL/LP
What's wondrous about The Floating Mountain Band is how casually and thoroughly they populate a headphone space with the most basic of elements: R Lutz's effects and subspace guitar drone, Ryan Jewell's chameleonic drumming and shaggy, trawling percussion. On *Trails*, they stretch way out while locking in, as Lutz sketches a reverberating highway blues while Jewell tries on rhythms like newsboy caps. No matter how often I play this, it's always surprising that a groove lays in wait, glowing and low key frenetic. Only once a forceful, extended castanet shake arrives does it become clear just how tightly The Floating Mountain Band have us in their grasp.

Violeta Garcia
FOBIA
Relative Pitch CD/DL
The second solo LP from this Argentinian cellist stretches and strains, panics and pitter-patters. An exploration of the artist's phobias, *FOBIA* may as well be a haphazard superstorm of spiny burrs. "GRAVEDAD" is all nervous tics – the noises Garcia wrests from her violoncello at moments suggest someone trying to squeeze a balloon until it bursts. "EL PASO DEL TIEMPO" alternates in its impressions, the knocking of a persistent visitor thinning into a woodpecker's hunger. "VIEJA" hyperventilates jaggedly and dramatically, as though the bow is struggling to saw through the very instrument that gives it purpose.

How I Quit Crack
Dreaming Eros
Somatic DL/MC
Photonic
Pecan Crazy DL/DVD
Every time I turn around, it seems, there is more How I Quit Crack material to relish. And while Texans Tina Forbis and Chris Cones are longtime devotees of dissociative recreational zoning, their recent output finds them nearing a pinnacle. Cavernous and comforting, *Dreaming Eros* is briefly an easy chair, then an adjoining dimension of soft sluices in muted colours – it can't be an accident that the lead cut is named "Swoon Age". Slightly more propulsive, *Photonic* leans into rhythmic psychedelia, its provocative, saturated visual components nestling nicely with the corresponding audio. Every element within the decelerating "Stoner Babies" melts together into a pulsating rainbow slime – like a rave B side slowed to a crawl, then left to bake in the sun.

Jason Kahn
Lacunae
A Wave Press CD/DL
Two slabs of scintillating signal-scatter from this New York born, Zurich based polymath comprise *Lacunae*. "13.5.21", performed live during a May 2021 concert at the Kunstraum Walcheturm, is a web of tonal jerks, bleeps, ejaculations and tremors. While the vibe is loosely threaded, at times Kahn's bits and bobs coalesce, calling his audience to attention. It's as though he's in the act of tuning something just so – that, or the piece is calibrating its listeners. The studio piece "Latvian Classical Radio" is heavier on dashes of radio bait, sounds saturated to distortion, keening and field-recorded manna, the flow routinely jump-cutting to nowhere or fritzing into mania. Played through good speakers and in a particular state of mind, select effects may seem to erupt from unlikely corners of the room, but that's hardly a minus here.

Point Cloud Noise II
Various
Silent DL
A rich nonuple layer gloom cake, this compilation, rattling the bones and the synapses in equal measure. If it has a theme, it's surreptitious overload: pure, furrowed brow pleasure. Rusted metal scrapes, whistle shrieks and sinewaves circle one another on "Panglossian Auto Destruct Button" from Oregon's Don Haugen. "Near The Gabor Limit – Part 3" finds Vienna's Farmers Manual engaging in a species of manipulative rhythmic shock therapy. Denmark's Ana Fosca makes static sing and sting with "Fractions Of Sue", which sounds like a sentient sandstorm whirling miles away that you also, somehow, happen to be at the heart of. Nevada's Wizards Warlocks Angel Dust contribute "Devoured", a cage match for tortured guitars. ☐

Size Matters by Byron Coley

Jo Bled
The Metallic Industrial Other
Histamine MC
Jo Bled is a Vermont based percussionist whose work is aimed in the direction of both free jazz and drones, as well as electronic manipulations of the results. The two pieces here are fairly short, which I think helps keep them focused, and are made up of metallic sounding work mixing clatter and shimmer into a sonic brew that equally resembles a garbage truck compacting metal trash in a predawn alley, and a gamelan orchestra heard through a malfunctioning walkie talkie. Jo's music has a persistence of forward motion that somehow feels oppressive and liberating at the same time. Which is a neat trick.

John Jasnoch & Adam Woolf
Bring Me My List Of Eleven People, I Need To Speak About The Past
Ten Shilling MC
A guitarist (Jasnoch) and a synth player (Wolf) from Sheffield, whose improvs are quite unlike most of the guitar/synth duos I've heard. The guitar is acoustic, played in a style that's like a slightly more percussive version of Eugene Chadbourne's scritchy Parachute-era solo work, and Wolf's wildly unorthodox approach to the synth provides a great plonky and interruptive counterpoint.

L'arbre Nu & Bardo Todol
Un Super Groupe Nommé Sapito
Artsy MC
A lone French sound artist and a pair of them from Argentina join forces to create a suite of jumbly jungly music containing elements of everything from sound poetry to tribal thumpery to mutating field recordings to the kind of genreless post-form improvisations I associate with Hartmut Geerken. The tape creates a dazzling sort of confusion if you'll allow it. Please sir, I'd like more.

Las Poftas/Cold Brats
Split
Beach Buddies/Hidden Hands 7"
This single's a few years old, but I've got a lot of catch-up to do regarding the Romanian underground scene. Both of these quartets are from Bucharest and sound great. Las Poftas have a female vocalist who makes me think of Los Angeles's Texacala Jones while the band combine strum-pop with a garage kick the way Boston's Neats did back in the day. Cold Brats take a different approach, blending New York-style noise rock with post-core sore throat vocals into a sound that is both meaty and roasted. Bucharest burns, baby!

No Friends Band
Destination Gardens
No Sides 3" CD-R
No Friends Band is primarily a solo project by Portland, Oregon's Kevin Cascell, former member of that most splendid combo Trumans Water. Like that outfit, NFB uses the basic tools of rock to create instrumental music that is fractured and experimental without abandoning its essential rockist identity. By this I mean it doesn't try for a 'post-rock' approach. The guitars, keys, drums and whatnot are clearly working within the 'rock' tradition, but NFB constantly pushes (sometimes gently, sometimes more forcibly) against the form's walls, moving outward with constant osmotic pressure.

Alison O'Donnell & Gayle Brogan
Ten For Devouring A Bogie Pie
Sonido Polifonico 7"
Gorgeous single commingling the pellucid voices of Gayle (from Burd Ellen) and Alison (from United Bible Studies) with lightly avant folk accompaniment, creating an experience of rare beauty. The tunes are both originals. but are built in such a way that they sound like they're from a traditional universe we just haven't experienced yet. Typically lovely label packaging as well.

Esa Pethman
In Belgium 1967
We Jazz 7"
Nice archival piece, documenting a pair of sessions for Belgian radio done by Esa Pethman, a reed player who was at the vanguard of Finnish jazz modernism. "The Flame" is Pethman's signature tune, played on an alto flute in a style that resembles Eric Dolphy's ballad mode. It's a solid piece, played over a Brubeck-esque vamp with a delicately swinging touch. The flip is cool as well, with Esa on tenor sax amid a septet who manifest a distinct Oliver Nelson vibe. Supposed to be the first of a series. Should be hep!

Pumice
Bung Eye
Stabbies... MC
Sunken
The Four Eyed
Akti MC
Māpura Music
Rock & Roll Back To The Set
Dubbed Tapes MC
Three new tapes from units associated with New Zealand sub-underground musical legend Stefan Neville. Pumice is his flagship enterprise, and it has lately been a duo with violinist Jade Farley. This time they're expanded to trio form by trombonist Ben Holmes. But regardless of the assemblage, Pumice has a distinct sound, based in the shadows of Kiwi bedroom pop, but twisted with some of the same experimental urges that shaped The Tall Dwarfs' music (although with this screwery coming from instrumental freakery rather than tape manipulation). *Bung Eye* is a great and shambling march down to the beach. Sunken is a long-running duo Neville founded with guitarist/fellow multitasker Antony Milton. The sounds on *The Four Eyed* are flowing abstract instrumentals in a neoclassical post-industrial vein. Thick gloops of guitar and rough sound textures, interspersed with episodes of percussive clamour, key squeedle and maybe even some flute tossed in there? Things flow well with edges that manage to be noisy without sounding harsh, with an aesthetic that feels something like a lace bridge between United Dairies and American Tapes. Māpura Music are an always changing workshop ensemble, helmed weekly by Neville, involving non-musicians (and others) exploring their personal versions of weird-ass spontaneous rock music. Results are all over the place, but remain uniformly fascinating and vastly appealing. Definitely worth an ear-peek.

Tha Retail Simps
Reverberant Scratch: 9 Shots In Tha Dark/Tha Simps Tapes
Total Punk MC
Expanded version of the debut LP by these Montreal garage hustlers. They have a winning way of combining classic old school rock moves with a very greasy post-punk ethos. The results are somewhere between The Symptoms, Chain Gang, The Gizmos and Celebrity Handshake, which means that both anarchy and order exist, held in an unlikely stasis, all presented with a certain rigour that implies (in the words of Pere Ubu) "it's just a joke, man". Somewhat hard to fathom conceptually, but very easy on the ears. The A side has the LP tracks, the flip is mostly covers and all-bonus all the time.

S/N/O/C/K
Various
Mystra MC
The fourth attempted (and second actually released) compilation of artists performing tunes by the immortal ramblin' songwriter Michael 'Snock' Hurley. This one was assembled by Hurley's pal Josh Burkett, so I assume he's pleased with it. And well he should be. Performers include Anthony Pasquarosa, Emily Robb, Peter Stampfel, Allysen Callery, Big Blood and various other weirdos, most of whom display a certain oddball folky bent, while generally paying fairly close attention to the details of their chosen song's melody (something for which Snock is a stickler). An absolutely top notch collection, as warmly strange as the figure it celebrates. ☐

Send cassettes, 7"s, 10"s, etc for possible inclusion in Size Matters to: Byron Coley, PO Box 627, Northampton, MA 01062, US

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The Boomerang

New reissues and archive releases

The Apostles
Best Forgotten: Early Demo, Live & Practise Tapes 81–83
Horn Of Plenty DL/LP
Notionally, at least, The Apostles were an anarcho-punk group. But *Best Forgotten* – a collection of largely unreleased tape work from their early years – tells a stranger and more complex story. A product of the London squat culture of the early 1980s, The Apostles were avant garde in mindset while being firmly DIY of means. Under the aegis of autodidact frontman Andy Martin, who joined the group in 1981, they transformed into something deeply personal, politically radical and riven with contradictions.

The Apostles were activists, involved in the running of Wapping Anarchy Centre and advancing causes like queer liberation and anti-racism that were still too hot for most of their anarcho peers to handle. But they were also provocateurs, shunning the woolly pacifism practised by much of the scene in favour of class war and direct action. In *Best Forgotten*'s sleevenotes, drummer Chris Low recalls visiting Martin in his Islington squat, finding he slept fully clothed in an army bed with lyrics from Whitehouse's *Right To Kill* scrawled on the walls. "When I asked him why he replied it was so he was always ready to attack."

The music on *Best Forgotten* is lo-fidelity and often rudimentary, a mix of shambling folk, jazzy improvisation and sound collage, some courtesy of collaborator Ian Rawes, later to found The London Sound Survey. The songs' power comes from Martin's polemic, which in line with the best anarcho-punk, balances intensity of conviction with frank admissions of alienation. "The Curse" is a punishing examination of queer desire that seethes with self-loathing. "The Patient" consists of Martin relating harrowing incidents from a period he spent in a psychiatric hospital over crunching sounds of heavy industry. "Alien Asian" is a vignette of prejudice that seems designed to induce feelings of discomfort in the audience, rather than liberal self-congratulation.

Best Forgotten is so named because, as Andy Martin puts it, The Apostles were a failure. Certainly, the music here often seems to be grasping just beyond its makers' reach. But something in these songs still feels combustible. 40 years on, what The Apostles did still can't be entirely quantified.
Louis Pattison

George Burt
Solo Guitar
Scatter Archive DL
A familiar presence on the Scottish improvised music scene, George Burt deserves to be more widely known. The guitarist has appeared on numerous recordings by Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra and the Burt-MacDonald band, but this is his only solo album to date. Recorded in 2001 and released three years later in a run of 100 CD-Rs by fellow GIO guitarist Neil Davidson, *Solo Guitar* captures Burt in puckish yet lyrical form. In his notes to the original release, Burt claims that he hasn't "a clue what's going on" with his own playing, recommending Keith Rowe "if you want a self-aware guitar player".

Yet for all his self-deprecation, Burt has a distinctive style, combining the brittle percussive attack of the Bailey-Russell school with the playful Caledonian anarchism of Maggie Nicols. Like Nicols – now a regular foil in GIO – Burt sweetens his abstraction with jazz fragments and folk echoes. Take "Johanna", an acoustic guitar ballad whose wistful changes are given an added vulnerability by sparing touches of dissonance.

The album is a patchwork of studio and live tracks, with the latter taken from a gig supporting the great pedal steel player Susan Alcorn. Burt acknowledges learning from Alcorn's sense of space, and on the opening "Actionstrasse" he uses a volume pedal to transform sharp strokes into airy chords, the sustained tones disrupted by bell-like harmonics and muted upstrokes. On "Bühnen" Burt alternates between hyperactive scrabble and ringing tones, thumb-snapping the lower strings while turning the tuning pegs to produce wobbly twangs.

At 13 minutes "I-35" is by far the longest track, offering a sustained engagement with a set of ideas. Focusing on ways of exciting the strings without using conventional picking, Burt begins by rubbing them with a metal slide in a circular motion, creating a woozy shimmer that continually threatens to spin off its axis. Moving on, he taps the strings with the side of the pick, the sonar blips gradually accelerating into staccato streams. With an impeccable sense of drama, Burt slaps the amp for splashes of reverb, the space age atmospherics haunted by the ghost of Joe Meek.
Stewart Smith

Cerberus Shoal
Cerberus Shoal
Temporary Residence DL/LP
…And Farewell To Hightide
Temporary Residence DL/LP
Homb
Temporary Residence DL/2×LP
The American post-rock groups of the mid-1990s didn't spring into life fully formed. Rather, many of the movement's protagonists cut their teeth in punk and hardcore circles before tiring of the genre's limitations and setting out in search of new musical horizons. You don't often get the chance to hear that sense of evolution within the confines of a living, breathing group, which is why a sift through Cerberus Shoal's back catalogue makes for a fascinating case study.

Founded in 1994, the Portland based ensemble started out playing emo-leaning post-hardcore in the vein of Moss Icon, or a slightly faster, punkier Slint. Their self-titled 1995 debut is neat if very much of its time, vacillating between serrated thrash-outs and spidery atmospheric segments like "Elena" that foreground Chriss Sutherland's tortured spoken word musings.

The albums that follow find Cerberus Shoal feel in a state of constant metamorphosis, reshaping themselves each time. Their second full-length, 1997's *…And Farewell To Hightide*, feels very much like the work of a punk band that had their head turned by Tortoise's *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*. "Broken Springs Spring Forth From Broken Clocks" mixes jazzy percussion with a languid, dubby sense of undertow. Sutherland's emo diarising is still in place on "Falling To Pieces Part One" and "JBO Vs Blin", here accompanied by warm horn serenades and guitars treated so they caw like a flock of distant seagulls.

1999's *Homb* marks another step on, and by now the umbilical link to punk rock has been fully severed. Made with input from avant ensemble Tarpigh, its five tracks take up a range of instrumentation including copper flutes, bells and talking drums to weave a mix of Windham Hill-style new age, pseudo-Arabic exotica and some climactic sturm-and-drang.

Cerberus Shoal never became more than a cult concern, and you can kind of understand why. Each of these albums feels like a snapshot of a band in a state of transition, rather than capturing anything definitive. Yet played back to back they show something remarkable: a band committed to change as a guiding precept, and pulling it off, time after time.
Louis Pattison

Essential Logic
Logically Yours
Hiss And Shake 5×LP
This thrillingly comprehensive new box set chronicles the output of singer, saxophonist and Essential Logic frontwoman Lora Logic, from her group's 1979 debut to a brand new record. A co-founder of X-Ray Spex and contributor to recordings by Red Crayola, The Stranglers and Swell Maps, Lora's wobbly brand of post-punk has a similar surrealist playfulness to Ludus and other gleeful experimentalists of the genre.

The set kicks off with Essential Logic's only full-length release as a band, *Beat Rhythm News (Waddle Ya Play?)*, a dadaist takedown of patriarchal systems. "Shabby Abbott" embraces the inquisitive rip it up attitude of the era via fun wordplay (*"I eat in an eating house/I sleep in a sleeping bag/Why can't they eat in their sleeping bags?/And sleep in their eating houses?"*). Like all the best post-punk, there's pop and avant garde here: "Wake Up" sounds like an itchy, brief "(Don't Fear) The Reaper"; "World Friction" packs half a dozen time shifts and genre flips into its seven minutes, settling into a woozy dub rhythm interrupted by Logic's freewheeling saxophone. Her vocals are as adaptable as her instrument, at once trilling and rumbling.

Next up is 1982 solo album *Pedigree Charm*, less hyperactive with ideas but still an engaging listen. The sound is more streamlined, akin to the disco indebted funk of Orange Juice or ESG, with the odd surprise thrown in such as the Raincoats-esque "Martian Man". The compilation *Aerosol Burns & Other Misdemeanours* rounds out this era, collecting singles and B sides with the variance in quality expected from such a grab-bag. Debut single "Aerosol Burns" is a Contortions-esque rush that demonstrates how commanding a narrator Logic was from the start. The rest of the tracks range from throwaway instrumental "Tame The Neighbours" to the glittering intricacy of "Music Is A Better Noise".

The collaged plastic blues of "Soul" unfortunately points towards lost potential. Along with longtime friend Poly Styrene, Logic joined a Hare Krishna community after the release of *Pedigree Charm*. The set's second compilation *No More Fiction* covers the late 1990s period when she made a tentative return to recording. Unreleased until now, these are much more conventional songs, with Logic's voice tempered to a clipped flatness somewhat reminiscent of Saint Etienne's Sarah Cracknell. Still, some of the material is charming, especially the DIY pop of "Not Me" and the retrofuturism of "On The Internet" (*"Download your emotions, baby"*).

The box is brought up to date with new album *Land Of Kali*, which again deals in more conventional rock/pop sounds and structures. The punch and experimental flair that defined her earlier work is largely absent – although her saxophone parts still have some surprising moments. Still, it's encouraging that Lora Logic is back in the studio, and it's genuinely exciting to survey the sheer breadth of her late 70s and early 80s work in particular.
Claire Biddles

Charles Stepney at home in Chicago, late 1960s

The home recordings of the late **Charles Stepney** reveal the composer, producer and arranger's brilliance in compellingly raw form. By **John Morrison**

Charles Stepney
Step On Step
International Anthem CD/DL/2×LP/MC

The divide between pop and experimental music is frequently overestimated. Music commonly classified as experimental will often employ familiar harmonic, melodic and rhythmic devices. Similarly, some of the best popular music pushes against the confines these definitions seek to impose by challenging textural and thematic conventions. Nowhere is the commingling of these two creative worlds more clearly illustrated than in the history of Black music in the city of Chicago.

More specifically, Chicago's Black jazz and R&B scenes have maintained a historically close and mutually dependent relationship. While The Arkestra were camped out on the city's Southside in the 1950s, developing some of the most forward thinking music in jazz, Sun Ra was producing some fantastically low fidelity home recordings of local doo-wop groups. Stylistically, many of Chicago's most notable jazz legends – Pete Cosey, Ramsey Lewis and Herbie Hancock among them – walked a path between experimental jazz and popular music.

Arranger, producer and composer Charles Stepney is one such Chicago son whose career embodies the close relationship between the city's jazz, R&B and experimental traditions. Throughout the 60s, he contributed piano and vibraphone to sessions for Chicago jazz legends like Eddie Harris and King Fleming while writing and arranging blues and R&B sides for the Chess and Cadet Records stable. Stepney's connection to the experimental remained apparent in the visionary recordings that he produced for Rotary Connection and the prepared piano intro he created for The Dells' 1968 soul anthem "Wear It On Our Face". According to Paul Steinbeck's fantastic book *Sound Experiments: The Music Of The AACM*, Muhal Richard Abrams even studied orchestration techniques under Stepney before forming the famed avant garde collective, an intriguing anecdote that illustrates the closeness of Chicago's jazz and R&B communities.

Not so coincidentally, the blossoming of Stepney's prowess as a producer and arranger would coincide with the dawn of soul music's greatest decade, the 70s. In the years leading up to his death in 1976, Stepney had a hand in crafting several classic albums, writing gorgeous arrangements for Terry Callier's folk soul masterpiece *What Color Is Love?* (1972) and producing a run of creatively ambitious commercial juggernauts such as *Open Our Eyes* (1974), *That's The Way Of The World* (1975) and *Spirit* (1976) for Earth, Wind & Fire.

Although Stepney's most complex productions were realised in the studio, the seeds of much of his music were sown with his own home recordings. *Step On Step* is a revelatory collection of 23 solo four-track recordings made in his Chicago home throughout the late 60s and early 70s. Compiled by his daughters for the International Anthem label, *Step On Step* brings us into the room with Stepney at the point of creation. Through these delightfully rough and characterful recordings the listener is given a first hand look at how Stepney united strands of soul, jazz and avant garde music.

Step On Step opens with his voice on the track entitled "Roll Tape". After we hear him perform a soundcheck on his inputs (*"Left channel, front. Right channel, front…"*) we are immediately greeted with the mid-tempo funk groove of "Gimme Some Sugar". As he vamps on electric piano, his synth bass, hi-hats and drum machine steadily hold down the tune's rhythm. "Daddy's Diddies" is a complementary piece which follows with a similarly stripped down arrangement of drum machine, electric piano and synth bass. While "Gimme Some Sugar" is completely instrumental, "Daddy's Diddies" features Stepney employing a breezy, wordless melody for a hook. The wistful "No Credit For This" showcases his rich, melodic keyboard style. The dreamy, melancholic opening chords of "Roadtrip" are augmented by the sound of Stepney's daughters reminiscing about family visits to relatives. Although it only features the electric piano and drum machine, "Roadtrip" is no less evocative and vivid.

One of the most important and thrilling discoveries found on *Step On Step* is a lo-fi, synth-led demo of Earth, Wind & Fire's 1975 track "That's The Way Of The World". Backed by an echo-drenched drum machine, all the foundational elements that made the song an enduring classic are present in this embryonic version. Its bittersweet keyboard intro and lead vocal melody (played here on Moog synthesizer) shine, and a side by side comparison of this demo with the studio version provides clear evidence of Stepney's gift for songcraft and arrangement. A similar transformation can be heard when contrasting the dark instrumental jazz of "Black Gold" with the sweeping orchestral soul of Rotary Connection's 1971 track "I Am The Black Gold Of The Sun".

With the Stepney sisters narrating and sharing memories of their father between songs, *Step On Step* is brimming with warmth and intimacy. Although Stepney displays some serious chops throughout the album, the playfulness in his approach to composition and willingness to experiment are equally evident. These quirky, forward thinking tracks were intended to become elaborate studio productions and would later occupy high places in the canon of popular music. This fact stands not only as testament to Stepney's brilliance, but to the underlying kinship between the musics that we consider popular and experimental. ☐

Rubie Stepney

Neu!
50!
Grönland 5×CD/DL/5×LP
In 1976, the art journal *Studio International* published historian and curator Germano Celant's reflections on the record as artwork. Celant examined ways in which artists, including Joseph Beuys, Lawrence Weiner, Dieter Roth and the Art & Language group were making creative use of the vinyl disc.

1973's *Neu! 2* might well have been placed in that context. The album's B side confronts listeners with prerecorded material played back perversely at 16 and 78 rpm or mangled by a dodgy cassette machine. A challenging listen, it has the air of a Fluxus action, putting a neo-dada slant on the material mediation of all recorded music. The cover art reinforces this impression: the group's name emblazoned in silver ink, the figure 2 in shocking pink; tracklisting and other details in faint typescript with handwritten corrections; washed out passport photographs, strips of sticky tape.

In his recent interview with Mike Barnes (*The Wire* 463) guitarist Michael Rother explains how that eccentric second side came about. He and drummer Klaus Dinger simply ran out of money to fund further studio time. Still, Neu! took a contentious step and opted to issue it. In 1972, penning notes for the UK release of Neu!'s first album, Hawkwind's Dave Brock held back from speculating on the duo's future, heeding their own statement, "we make no premature fixing of style, as we are very dependent on situations and circumstances". That debut's fabulous opening track "Hallogallo" with its choppy riffing immediacy, heady swirling textures and propulsive drumming may have leapt out as the most instantly addictive rock instrumental since Pink Floyd's "Interstellar Overdrive" five years earlier, but there was much on *Neu!* that was elusive, as well as beguiling.

Whereas Neu!'s immediate contemporaries Roxy Music followed the selfconscious art rock of their self-titled debut with the polished and slickly packaged camp of *For Your Pleasure*, en route for rock's mainstream, the German duo opted for provocation. Not only did punk and new wave recognise and embrace Neu!'s anarchic spirit, "Hero" and much else on third album *Neu! 75* anticipated punk's snarling energy and purgative impact. *50!* makes these vital recordings available once again, along with the group's less vital fourth album.

The box set also includes a series of covers and remixes from current Neu! enthusiasts, including Mogwai and Guerilla Toss. With the exception of a contribution from Negativland, who take their name from a track on *Neu!*, these tributes feed on the rhythmic drive and mobile textures of the originals, rather than nurturing that subversively lurking elusiveness which has made Neu!'s music so difficult to pin down and so enduringly intriguing. New listeners may be drawn by these tributes, to experience something far more compelling, still flowing from the source.
Julian Cowley

Jocelyn Pook
Blight
purge.xxx LP
Musician and composer Jocelyn Pook has created soundtracks for numerous films, most notably Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). Pook's sole score prior to that was for John Smith's *Blight* (1996). Broadcast as part of the BBC series *Sound On Film*, *Blight* concerned the demolition of homes to make way for the M11 motorway. Smith's work is often powered by the incongruity generated when images appear to contradict the sound or dialogue. 1976's *The Girl Chewing Gum* for example deconstructs our expectations of the narrator via a slowly spiralling surrealist reveal.

While Smith's technique on *Blight* remains the same, its subject matter requires weightier emotive heft so that his playful style does not undercut the film's essential brevity. This is provided by Pook. Behind images of rubble-strewn houses being dismantled and the voices of residents telling various stories about their homes, a sombre drone – which recalls Mark Jenkin's more recent soundtrack to his own film, *Bait* – creeps low and constant in the mixture. When Smith settles on a now exposed internal wall that's painted with the black and white design of *The Exorcist*, Pook doubles down on the morbid metaphor by introducing a funereal piano march.

As the film draws to a close, his strings buck and whip in tempered frenzy, channelling the anger of the residents forced to watch their houses become rubble. The vinyl release also contains a second track, a reimagining of the material which captures the almost tango-like freneticism of this final crescendo, stretching it out in sustained tension.

However, it's the original score that is most potent and, while it works best consumed as a component of Smith's original piece, Pook's composition has enough drama and exciting dynamics to stand apart from the visual element.
Spenser Tomson

Thorr's Hammer
Dommedagsnatt
Daymare CD
Thorr's Hammer have always been more of a legend than a band. Guitarists Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson formed the group in 1994, and the following year recruited vocalist Runhild Gammelsæter, then a teenage exchange student. With the addition of bassist James Hale and drummer Jamie Sykes, they wrote some songs, played exactly two gigs, and recorded the *Dommedagsnatt* EP. Gammelsæter returned to Norway, O'Malley and Sykes went on to form Burning Witch while Anderson formed his own band Goatsnake, and *Dommedagsnatt* became the very first release on the Southern Lord label.

In the years that followed, O'Malley and Anderson became avant metal heroes, together and separately, with Burning Witch, Sunn O))) and Khanate, while Gammelsæter popped her head out of her laboratory from time to time (in real life she's a respected biologist), appearing on Sunn O)))'s *White1*, collaborating with James Plotkin and making a brilliant solo album, 2008's *Amplicon*. But Thorr's Hammer was a project that many underground metal types recalled with great affection, and in 2010 they were invited by Hellhammer/Celtic Frost/Triptykon mastermind Thomas Gabriel Fischer aka Tom G Warrior to reunite at the Roadburn festival in the Netherlands.

They performed the three songs from *Dommedagsnatt* and the new piece "Aasgaardsreien". In 2019, that performance was released as the vinyl-only *Live By Command Of Tom G Warrior, Only Death Is Real – 16 April 2010 Roadburn, Netherlands*. Now, both recordings, studio and live, have been combined on this Japan-only CD reissue of *Dommedagsnatt*, making it the ultimate document for all Thorr's Hammer fans.

The EP is a strong youthful effort, with a surprisingly majestic sense of drama thanks to Gammelsæter's ability to shift between a clean (if low) crooning style and deep, guttural roars. The riffs fall from the sky like slow motion meteors and the drums punctuate more than propel. The live recordings are both longer (two songs gain more than a minute each, and the title piece expands from eight to 14) and heavier, soaked in reverb, feedback and distortion. Gammelsæter's command of her voice is much greater than it was at 17 too; she roars like a lioness.
Phil Freeman

Masahiko Togashi with Don Cherry & Charlie Haden
Song Of Soil
Wewantsounds DL/LP
Japanese percussionist Masahiko Togashi recorded *Song Of Soil* in Paris in 1979 with Don Cherry and Charlie Haden. The album, released on Paddle Wheel in Japan, mixed global influences with jazz and ambient soundscapes – it has stylistic affinities with Cherry's contemporaneous *Codona* release on ECM. It's remastered and reissued here with original artwork.

From the early 1960s, Togashi (1940–2007) was a leading exponent of free jazz. He played with Sadao Watanabe, Toshiko Akiyoshi and Tony Scott, and from 1965 led probably the first Japanese free jazz group, also accompanying visitors such as Sonny Rollins and Ornette Coleman. An accident in 1970 left him paralysed from the waist down, but a special drumkit enabled him to play again from the mid-70s.

His new style was more spiritual, sparse and abstract, but still full of energy and intensity. The two Americans were in Paris with their Ornette tribute band – though it was more than that – Old And New Dreams. Martin Meissonnier set up the gig, and became Cherry's agent, though his free spirit was hard to manage. "I had negotiated a fabulous contract with Virgin for him. Not interested," commented Meissonnier. "He wanted to be free. A fundamental concept for him."

The resulting album features six Togashi originals, and is essentially cool in ethos. The boppish theme "June" features Cherry over a free groove from Togashi and Haden. It looks to be Togashi and Cherry on percussion for the spare "Words Of Wind Part 1", and again – this time with Cherry on flute – on "Part 2". "Oasis" is a miraculous Ornette-ish creation with a powerful solo from Haden. What's intriguing is the very different drumming from Ed Blackwell or Billy Higgins – sparser but still totally simpatico. *Song Of Soil* led Togashi to collaborations with Paul Bley, Steve Lacy and Yuji Takahashi, which on this evidence are well worth exploring.
Andy Hamilton

Virgin Prunes
…If I Die, I Die
Mute/BMG CD/DL/2×LP
Something of an overlooked group in the 1980s goth canon, Virgin Prunes emerged from the same close-knit Dublin scene as U2 and continued in almost the exact opposite direction. Willfully obscure and pretentious (and all the better for it), their music was highly conceptual and largely released on obtuse formats: 1981's *A New Form Of Beauty* came out in seven parts, including a 10" and cassette, but also an exhibition and unreleased film.

Reissued to mark its 40th anniversary, the band's 1982 debut is one of only two traditional format albums they recorded before their split in 1986. Its gothic depths and sky-wide heights are dizzying, and it's flecked with camp theatricality throughout. The album's songs are organised under the banners of *Earth* and *Sky* – a somewhat silly conceit that nevertheless proves effective.

The first side (*Earth*) is cavernous and moody: "Sweethome Under White Clouds" is a particularly lyrical example of their fascination with unusual forms of beauty and their origins in the natural world (*"Like water I had no colour/Running free/Eternal beauty"*). It also showcases the full effect of Virgin Prunes' three vocalists singing simultaneously. The second side (*Sky*) is as anthemic as nihilistic music can be, something like The Teardrop Explodes fronted by Peter Murphy. "Baby Turns Blue" is a parallel world post-punk dancefloor filler while "Caucasian Walk" is the sound of intensity let out into the air, wide open and angry.

The CD version of the reissue comes with a disc of curios for the completist: demos, bonus tracks and a 12" mix of "Baby Turns Blue" that's even better than the original.
Claire Biddles

The Inner Sleeve

This month's artwork selected by **Melvin Gibbs**

Ornette Coleman
Dancing In Your Head
A&M 1977
Artwork by Dorothy Baer

Titus Oaks record shop in Brooklyn was a magical place. I would spend hours browsing the bins, bonding with other music lovers frequenting the store, and shooting the breeze with George Littlejohn, the knowledgeable brother who, as far as I could tell, ran the place.

One of the most striking things about the store was the array of albums mounted on the walls, carefully lit displays that made the place seem as much like a popular art gallery as a music shop. The more Afrocentric-looking covers, whether portraits of people in Afros and dashikis or drawings reminiscent of the art Emory Douglas made for the Black Panthers, were the ones that I gave the most attention to. But one in particular caught my eye. That cover focused on an object that looked like a trickster's version of a harlequin mask which, when flipped 180 degrees, revealed an inversion of the figure you'd originally seen. It was obvious that the object bore some connection to the music inside, but teenage me had no idea what that connection might be.

The title *Dancing In Your Head* compounded the enigma. Was *that* what dancing in your head was supposed to look like? So when I went to Titus Oaks, I stuck with the Afros and dashikis and left the harlequin alone, until a friend played Ornette Coleman's *Science Fiction* for me. The album was a revelation that made me want to hear more. The next time I went to Titus Oaks I pulled that harlequin cover off the wall and had George stick it in a paper bag for me. Then I travelled down Flatbush Avenue and beyond, returned home and placed the record on my turntable.

What emerged from my speakers sounded like a song a baby would create if it could communicate using music as its language. As the music evolved, that childish feeling gave way to the kind of unfiltered joy that is always so hard for mature beings to access. But somehow this group of adults did.

The cover image did indeed bear a connection to the music on the album. The playful reversibility of the image was echoed in the reversibility of musical roles played by the instruments in Ornette Coleman's group Prime Time, with the bass being almost as much of a lead voice as the sax while the guitars played a supporting role. When, thanks to guitarist Alfonia Tims, I got the opportunity to spend time around Ornette and learn about the hows and whys of harmolodics, his system of creation, I found the connection was overt. Forms of functional reversibility are fundamental to his system.

If someone made music that had the overt goal of translating that cover artwork into sound, they wouldn't necessarily recreate harmolodics, but they would come up with something in dialogue with what Ornette was doing. The image he placed on the cover of *Dancing In Your Head* is as good an entry point as any if you are trying to wrap your head around what Ornette Coleman was doing with Prime Time. ☐ Melvin Gibbs's *The Anamiba Sessions Vol 1: The Wave* is released this month by Editions Mego

Print Run

New music books

Gee Vaucher, untitled collage from *International Anthem 2: Domestic Violence* (1979)

Gee Vaucher: Beyond Punk, Feminism And The Avant-Garde

Rebecca Binns

Manchester University Press Pbk 240 pp

While the story of anarcho-punk pioneers Crass has been extensively documented, that of their resident artist Gee Vaucher is less well recorded. As Rebecca Binns's exhaustive account of the artist's life and work boldly underlines, Vaucher's enormous contribution to the group's image (through painting, collage and design) sent out a war cry that was more sociopolitically charged than first wave punk rock's no future chorusing.

At one point in the text, graffiti artist Banksy pays tribute to the painting Vaucher created for the Crass/Poison Girls 7" single *Bloody Revolutions/Persons Unknown* (1980). Published as a foldout poster that formed the record's sleeve, it depicts Queen Elizabeth II, Pope John Paul II, the figure of Justice and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as a gang of unruly street punks. For Banksy, this potent image, aimed at the ruling figureheads of the establishment, as well as caustically commentating on how the once rebellious punk rock movement had been manipulated by the music industry, blew his young mind. "This was 'real' art," he exclaims, "– but for the left. Somehow that picture made me feel our side could win."

That same feeling of empowerment courses through the majority of Vaucher's work, especially the period during the late 70s and 80s when many of her most recognised images were realised at Dial House, the communal habitat in Essex she shared with writer, fellow activist, drummer and Crass founding member Penny Rimbaud and the rest of the group. The first of these is for the cover of the debut Crass LP *The Feeding Of The 5000* (1978), a monochrome painting that juxtaposes scenes of political turmoil with childhood memories of playing in the rubble of demolished buildings.

Through interviews Binns effectively maps out this early part of the artist's life – growing up in bomb-blitzed Dagenham as part of a working class Methodist family, until eventually moving to Essex where she attended art school at the South-East Essex School of Art and Design. Vaucher's art school training developed her painting, as well as introducing her to the medium of collage that she later utilised in her self-published newspaper *International Anthem* (1977), subtitled *Nihilist Newspaper For The Living*.

Her collages for *IA* railed against global consumerism, sexism, political corruption, religion and war, and were the blueprint for the powerful imagery she later produced for the covers of such Crass albums as *Penis Envy* (1981) and *Yes Sir, I Will* (1983). Taking her cue from the dadaist collages of Hannah Höch and 60s UK pop artist Richard Hamilton, together with the photomontages of German anti-Nazi artist John Heartfield and UK artist Peter Kennard's CND motivated anti-war posters, Vaucher developed an almost photoreal technique by using gouache paint to embellish her initial collaged compositions.

Each of these works is described in depth by Binns, together with the various social, political and personal connections that inspired their creation. Equally interesting are her comparisons between Vaucher's radically politicised visual messaging and that of more recognised punk art contemporaries such as Jamie Reid and Linder, both of whom were working with similar media within the corporate music industry.

As the book nears its conclusion, Binns discusses how Vaucher's art has continued to advance since the demise of Crass, effectively avoiding being engulfed by the voracious fine art market. Profusely illustrated throughout, this well researched monograph provides a much needed insight into the life and work of an extraordinary artist, social commentator and scalpel sharp satirist – as well as adding an important, previously mislaid chapter to the sprawling history of alternative art and punk rock culture.

Edwin Pouncey

Extreme Music: From Silence To Noise And Everything In Between

Michael Tau

Feral House Pbk 480 pp

I'll admit that I winced a little on seeing the title of Michael Tau's *Extreme Music*. I assumed his book would be a paean to the community that seems to take pleasure in presenting music, or noise, at literally deafening volumes on a macho dare to see who can handle it. But I was wrong. Here's a broad survey of the various ways the culture pushes boundaries of every kind, in both content and presentation.

This includes noise music, drone, speedcore, records obsessed with medical minutiae and bodily functions, compositions running from one second to years, pieces that are completely silent, and music distributed on picture discs, coloured or oddly shaped vinyl, floppy discs, microcassettes, eight-track tapes and USB sticks. And let's not forget packages and pressings containing bodily fluids or human hair.

It seems fair to ask: what's the motivation behind all this? The obvious answer is that it's human nature to constantly push past the limits of what's been accomplished before. Also, aesthetic standards established by one group may not feel right to another. Noise icon Merzbow, for example, is reported to have said to one sceptic, "If by noise, you mean uncomfortable sound, then pop music is noise to me."

And listeners who immerse themselves deeply in a particular genre can detect nuances that outsiders can't: On the subject of harsh noise wall music, which will invariably sound like exactly that to unseasoned listeners, Tau points out that HNWs can vary subtly in timbre and pitch, and the granularity of the noise can differ among recordings.

Political or (anti-)commercial considerations often come up when discussing musical extremes. About brazenly lo-fi lobit music, created using 8-bit chips from old video games, Kai Nobuko, aka Toxic Chicken, says, "It was the ideal 'fuck you' against the snobbish world of the rich big-time producers that enjoy making everything sound squeaky clean and lifeless." (Counterpoint: Many of the strange artefacts described in *Extreme Music* are prized for their value to collectors first and foremost. What is the musical worth of a 1" record that can't actually be played?)

Competition is of course a factor in pushing certain boundaries. Producer Speedcore Dave acknowledges that "pissing contests" were partly responsible for the development of splittercore, eventually driving tempos to 500 bpm and beyond. But then, at those speeds (which others have pushed as far as 640,000 bpm), individual beats can no longer be perceived, and other qualities emerge, similar to the way instrumental ensembles can generate unforeseen overtones.

Cynics who insist that everything has been done before may point out the similarities between, say, no-input music (in which nothing is connected to the mixer, so we hear only the incidental sounds of the mixer itself) and Cage's *4'33"* – and Tau does note this. But contemporary technology introduces possibilities that were never achievable previously, such as ultra-complex digital mashups and years-long pieces consisting of WAV files generated algorithmically.

Inevitably, a couple of the scenes Tau covers push into questionable territory. One of the book's sections includes descriptions of releases using "anonymous" found recordings that can be deeply personal or embarrassing. In the age of internet virality, it's not inconceivable that these recordings will eventually be heard by the people in the recordings or (worse) their friends and family. To his credit Tau puts his objective documentarian hat aside and addresses the ethical implications when discussing these, but it's not unreasonable to include them for the sake of completeness.

Dave Mandl

Gee Vaucher

You're With Stupid: kranky, Chicago And The Reinvention Of Indie Music
Bruce Adams
American Music Series Hbk 288 pp
How satisfying it would be to report that this history of the independent label kranky and the Chicago ecosystem it arose from echoes the opening of one of its landmark releases, the CD reissue of Godspeed You! Black Emperor's *F#A#∞: "The car's on fire and there's no driver at the wheel"*. In truth, the story is one of steady mileage, economical consumption and two very careful owners. But what a soundtrack on the way.

Bruce Adams co-founded kranky in 1993 with his Cargo distribution colleague Joel Leoschke (to whom he sold his stake in 2005). As he tells it, Chicago really was the right place at the right time. In a city steeped in music history yet away from the competitive glare of Los Angeles and New York, he credits the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians with pioneering a self-reliant underground in the 1960s. By the cusp of the 90s, artists enjoyed low rents, ample venues and plenty of those music-adjacent jobs in record shops, bars and warehouses that foster organic collaboration.

Adams draws upon both archive cuttings and his own interviews with more than 70 participants or admirers of the scene. He recounts how cross-pollination between acts including Tortoise, Gastr del Sol and Rob Mazurek's Chicago Underground project moved beyond the signature in your face sounds of local labels Wax Trax! and Touch & Go, sketching the architecture of what would later become walled in as post-rock and forming international bonds with acts such as Stereolab and Flying Saucer Attack.

Despite arising from the same mutually supportive network, kranky didn't as a rule release Chicago artists. The net was cast wider in search of an aesthetic initially defined by Labradford's debut *Prazision* – spacious, understated, mysterious and melancholy, with a dash of retro space age styling – and later expanded by GY!BE's chamber apocalyptics, Low's hushed tension and lysergic minimalists Stars Of The Lid, along with one-offs such as the numerologically composed *Preparation* by Philosopher's Stone.

Beyond misanthropic marketing slogans such as "Honk if you hate people too", Adams and Leoschke balanced art and ethics with prudent business sense. Keen not to repeat the chaos they witnessed nearby, their ten adopted 'kranky kommandments' included paying royalties on time, excluding band photos from artwork and not releasing 7" singles.

While proud of kranky's independence, Adams is refreshingly even-handed about the compromises made by many to create and sell records. He takes particular issue with Steve Albini's 1994 letter to the editor of *Chicago Reader* dubbing homegrown successes Smashing Pumpkins, Liz Phair and Urge Overkill "three pandering sluts". Although himself unimpressed by Urge Overkill's lounge-lizard schtick, he respects Smashing Pumpkins' ambitious vision and defends Phair against scenester scorn fuelled as much by sexism as indie snobbery.

Acknowledging how unwelcoming the Guyville documented in Phair's 1993 *Exile In Guyville* must have felt, he gives space to the accounts of women from the scene. Likewise, hindsight brings awareness of how much his horizons were limited by Chicago's north-south racial segregation, admitting that he first heard the city's footwork producers through Planet Mu.

If there are more scandals or rampant egos to relate, the self-effacing Adams gives the impression he was too busy fulfilling mail-outs or catching gigs to notice. Yet *You're With Stupid* proves him as adept at communicating what it was like to be immersed in a time and place of intense creativity as behind the scenes making it happen.
Abi Bliss

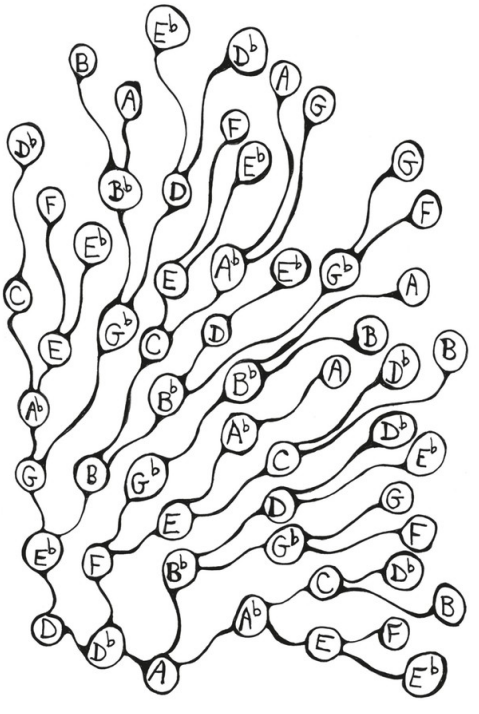
Sonic Elements: Matrices, Cosmograms, & Ostinatos Of Circularity
Adam Rudolph
Meta Records Pbk 122 pp
The rear cover of percussionist Adam Rudolph's latest book carries endorsements from trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith, and saxophonists Dave Liebman and Henry Threadgill. Although his own name may not carry comparable weight, Rudolph has, since the 1970s, worked extensively with instrumentalists of that high calibre, gravitating towards visionaries with a taste for cross-cultural blending. His own passionate interest in musical traditions across the globe steered him into the company of catalytic figures such as Don Cherry, Jon Hassell and, most regularly, Yusef Lateef. Lessons from such encounters have been channelled into Rudolph's various groups.

Sonic Elements is an introduction to specific procedures that Rudolph has developed in order to generate musical materials for those groups. The grids, diagrams and calligraphic designs he terms Matrices, Cosmograms and Ostinatos of Circularity have key roles to play in the development of compositionally structured improvised performances by his Go: Organic Orchestra. Essentially this is a guide for readers interested in possibilities for such structuration, or for musicians keen to become more resourceful improvisors.

From the outset, Rudolph readily acknowledges indebtedness to mentors such as Lateef and trumpeter Charles Moore, who supported his determination to blaze his own way rather than trundle along a well-worn route. He also cites precedents and parallels to certain choices he has made, certain practices he has adopted, found in various Asian and African musical traditions. Among the book's illustrative materials, a particularly striking inclusion is an intricate diagram drawn by John Coltrane, in 1960, in order to demonstrate "a non-linear multiplicity of possible tone relationships". Juxtaposed is a comparably intricate drawing made, in 1981, by renowned Indian percussionist Pandit Taranath Rao to illustrate, for Rudolph, multiple relationships that exist, potentially, between various rhythm cycles.

Not only does Rudolph generously acknowledge sources of inspiration, but he encourages readers to add their own innovations, or to adapt his methods in order to meet their own requirements. Constructing a Matrix, he arranges within the rows and columns of a grid a selection of notes found in standard Western tuning, but he is eager to point out that other systems of intonation are no less viable. The scale or melodic shape that forms the top row, with its inversion occupying the left column, may be subject to countless variations to arrive at some different "sound feeling". His Cosmograms are a means to represent intervallic relationships in non-linear fashion. His Ostinatos of Circularity address issues of phrasing and form, initiating imaginative combinations of rhythmic cells, and coordinated expansion of cycles.

Interspersed with this book's practical elements are Rudolph's insights and musings on the nature of music in relation to our human condition and our capacity for intuition. The mystical beliefs encapsulated in his declaration that "music is a profound means by which we share our intimate and deep desire for universal consciousness" may not ring true for all his readers, but they do shed light on the outlook that informs music to be heard at his concerts and on his recordings.
Julian Cowley



Adam Rudolph, ***Double Intervallic Cosmogram***

Adam Rudolph

Improvising The Score
Gretchen L Carlson
University of Mississippi Press Hbk 212 pp
Gretchen Carlson's intriguing title examines collaborations between jazz composers and independent film makers, in particular the soundtracks for films directed by Spike Lee (*Malcolm X*, *When The Levees Broke*), Alejandro González Iñárritu (*Birdman*), Alan Rudolph (*Afterglow*), and Woody Allen (*Hannah And Her Sisters*). Musicians focused on are Terence Blanchard, Antonio Sánchez, Mark Isham and Dick Hyman.

It's an academic title that employs a sociological approach drawing on ethnographic research, as well as score and film analysis. But there is plenty of interview material with composers and film production personnel, whose practice the author contrasts with conventional Hollywood composers.

Recent decades have seen a small body of research on the topic, by writers such as Krin Gabbard, John Caldwell, Peter Elsdon and Jennifer Doctor. But for Carlson, the voices of musicians have been missing from this literature; media and culture industry studies do not specifically address the work of contemporary jazz composers. Her book argues that the jazz literature is too concerned with the music's status as autonomous art. What makes film collaborations of particular interest, she argues, is a "tension between the improvisational ideals of [jazz] and the conventionally highly structured and regulated expectations of [film]".

Aside from the four main case studies, there's plentiful discussion of classics such as Duke Ellington's score for *Anatomy Of A Murder*. While Krin Gabbard argues that the music is not sufficiently integrated with the film, for Mervyn Cooke the soundtrack represents "a clear manifestation of modernist leanings in soundtrack design".

Carlson disagrees with these authorities in their assumption that the film should be prioritised over the music. Her chapter on "Risk And Experimentation In The Improvised Soundtracks Of *Birdman* And *Afterglow*" focuses on the rarest form of film soundtracks, the fully improvised score, beginning with an early – perhaps the first – example, Miles Davis's *Acenseur Pour L'Echafaud* (*Lift To The Scaffold*). The dearth, she argues, is directly related to the incompatibility between commercial film making conventions and improvisation. As Krin Gabbard writes, "The improvising jazz artist, who answers to a private sense of which sounds are right for which moment, is almost by definition incompatible with standard film music practice."

Carlson then dives into the work of auteur-mavericks Alejandro González Iñárritu and Alan Rudolph. Antonio Sánchez's percussion score for Iñárritu's *Birdman* and Mark Isham's small-group jazz score for Rudolph's *Afterglow* choose improvising musicians to evoke film experience. These directors regard jazz as an integral component of the film itself; the uniqueness of the *Birdman* soundtrack, Carlson argues, lies not only in its improvised creation but in its development during the preproduction stage of filming. Unusually, Sánchez had to score the film before it was completed, in a single continuous uninterrupted shot. Carlson analyses how the music achieves the director's aim of perceptible liveness.

The chapter on Spike Lee and jazz trumpeter Terence Blanchard offers readings of *Mo' Better Blues*, *Malcolm X* and *When The Levees Broke*. Finally, there's a chapter on Dick Hyman's collaboration with Woody Allen, with its use of jazz to express nostalgia, idealism and escapism. The conclusion, "Miles Ahead: A New Way Of Making Movie Music?" addresses the recent increase in jazz-related films. The book could perhaps have used a further edit to make the structure and argument clearer and more succinct. But the issues it discusses are fascinating ones, and it's a very worthwhile read.
Andy Hamilton

New biographies give extensive insights into the lives of jazz greats **Sonny Rollins** and **Albert Ayler**. By **Phil Freeman**

Saxophone Colossus: The Life & Music Of Sonny Rollins
Aidan Levy
Hachette Hbk 740 pp
Holy Ghost: The Life & Death Of Free Jazz Pioneer Albert Ayler
Richard Koloda
Jawbone Press Pbk 304 pp
How much do you want to know about Sonny Rollins? The man commonly regarded as the greatest living jazz saxophonist – still, despite the fact that he has been retired from performance for a decade due to respiratory illness – has led a fascinating life. Politically engaged, deeply spiritual and prone to a self-doubt as deep as his love of the music, he has made some of the greatest albums in jazz history (*Sonny Rollins Plus 4*, *Way Out West*, *Saxophone Colossus* and *East Broadway Run Down* belong in any serious collection, and one could make arguments for many others) but has also walked away from the industry and the scene for years at a time, choosing to practice in solitude on the Williamsburg Bridge in the early 1960s, and study yoga and meditation in India in the early 70s. But does his life merit a more than 700 page biography that rattles off every performance, including date and city, that author Aidan Levy can find a printed record of?

It's clear from the book's first pages that its subject is a biographer's dream. Rollins is a prolific letter writer and a journal-keeper, and his wife Lucille was his manager for decades, so business was kept in-house as well, and all his papers were donated to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture years ago. Levy clearly spent years poring over all that material, and interviewing everyone he could. There's a difference between exhaustive and exhausting, though, and *Saxophone Colossus* occasionally lands on the wrong side of the line.

That said, Levy doesn't take his subject's greatness for granted: he makes an affirmative case for why the reader should care about Sonny Rollins and his music, analysing recordings from all eras of his career in depth. The evolution of his style is made clear, as is his continual, restless dissatisfaction with the quality of his own work. (This was balanced by a strong belief in jazz's superiority to other forms of music, though; Rollins's wish that his contributions to The Rolling Stones' *Tattoo You* album go uncredited is one of the book's funnier moments.)

Levy's indefatigable research and interviewing process has allowed him to fill *Saxophone Colossus* with a vast chorus of voices – old and new quotes from scores of friends, relatives, ex-girlfriends and ex-wives, bandmates and peers. These, in addition to insights from Rollins himself, make this a 360 degree portrayal of the book's subject. Some of the most fascinating sections, precisely because they are so little documented on record, concern Rollins's engagement with the avant garde. As early as 1959, he was hanging out and sharing ideas with Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry in Los Angeles; a decade later, he developed a mentor/tutor relationship with a young David S Ware that would last until the early 80s.

Toward the end, some fast-forwarding sets in: where early chapters might cover a single year, later ones cover a decade or more in a leap. But ultimately, there are so many great stories of legendary performances and in-depth analyses of classic albums in this book's pages that it would be churlish to demand even more.

If Sonny Rollins is a colossus striding across jazz history from the 50s to the present day (even in his absence he is still a legacy to contend with), Albert Ayler was a flaming comet that shot across the sky for less than a decade, but left a permanent mark. Richard Koloda's *Holy Ghost* is the second book about him to appear in English this year, following a long-overdue translation of Peter Niklas Wilson's *Spirits Rejoice*.

Like *Saxophone Colossus*, it is deeply researched, and benefits from extensive interviews with Ayler's family, most notably his younger trumpet-playing brother Donald, who gives deep insights into their relationship, both musical and otherwise. Koloda also quotes extensively from contemporaneous reviews and features in jazz magazines from throughout Ayler's career, revealing – and sometimes arguing with – how his music was portrayed, and the political agendas that were often attached to it by others. This is particularly important when he deals with the recordings from 1966 featuring violinist Michel Samson, whom some, like poets Amiri Baraka and Ted Joans, viewed as a Eurocentric intruder polluting Ayler's music with classical ideas. Koloda disagrees, and makes a strong case for that period of the saxophonist's artistic development.

Holy Ghost isn't a hagiography by any means; when the music was misguided or fell short of the players' goals, he says so. But its greatest value comes from the detailed narrative he's able to construct, revealing, for example, that the creative relationship between Ayler and Cecil Taylor lasted much longer than is often stated. This book is much more than a mere biography. It adds a great deal to Ayler scholarship, and to the history of avant garde jazz in general. ☐

On Screen

Films & DVDs

Still from *Mes* (*We*, 1980)

Artūras Barysas in *Tas Saldus Žodis* (1977)

Still from *Du Kart Du* (*2×2*, 1972)

Restored Short Films 1972–82

Artūras Barysas (Director)

Art-Film/LRT Mediateka 2022/lrt.lt

Artūras Barysas was a film maker and vocalist who, along with his group Ir Visa Tai Kas Yra Gražu Yra Gražu, had a profound influence on the Lithuanian underground. Known to friends as Baras, he co-founded the band with guitarist Artūras Šlipavičius in 1987. Their early post-punk recordings are a maelstrom of anarchic energy that resonated with Lithuanians living under the Soviet regime in the late 1980s. As a frontman, Barysas was magnetic, modelling himself after singers like Captain Beefheart. He continued performing with the band on and off until his death in 2005.

As a film director, he was most prolific in the 70s and early 80s. Being a member of the Lithuanian Amateur Filmmakers Union gave him access to equipment and relative freedom from communist censorship. Despite his myopia, he created many shorts and usually cast himself, employing others to operate the camera.

Films like *Anekdotas Apie Metrą* (*Anecdote About The Metre*, 1976), in which Barysas orders a metre's worth of coffee, or *Esė* (*Essay*, 1981), which shows a young couple indulging in Western contraband, have a prankster-like quality evocative of Fluxus happenings and softly critique the absurd rigidity of Soviet society. Other films such as *Romas*, *Renata*, *Rimas* (1977) and *Taina* (1974) are more lyrical, but maintain an aura of subversive irony.

Barysas often shot with natural light and had his actors improvise, adding a sense of realism to the scenes. Filmed in a cafeteria – complete with bemused onlookers – *Akivaizdu, Bet Neįtikėtina* (*Obvious, But Unbelievable*, 1982) shows two men from different social circles dining at the same table. This homogeneous setting acts as a backdrop for their mutual prejudices. Those men, Barysas suggests, are no different from the utilitarian uniformity of the Soviet system that both feeds and confines them.

Barysas is sometimes compared to the Lithuanian-American film maker Jonas Mekas, but Mekas documented everyday life in a diaristic fashion. Barysas, inspired though he was by quotidian experiences, constructed works of narrative fiction. One exception is *Mes* (*We*, 1980). It depicts Second World War veterans taking part in a Victory Day parade. The restored footage is accompanied by a series of descending drones. Šarūnas Nakas's eerie music shifts the emotional resonance into one of foreboding, negating the film's original 'patriotic' soundtrack. Stylistically, *Mes* doesn't deviate far from other propaganda documentaries from this time. The ambiguity around its message allowed *Mes* to be interpreted as ironic by Barysas's contemporaries, and sincere by the Amateur Filmmakers Union.

In his personal life, Barysas was sometimes a contentious figure. Plagued by years of alcoholism, he was abusive to his partner and their son. Barysas's volatile nature is apparent in some of his films, too. *Intelektuali Popiete* (*Intellectual Afternoon*, 1982) sees him visit a zoo and taunt the animals. *Du Kart Du* (*2×2*, 1972) is a tale of classroom rebellion that descends into adolescent misogyny. A misbehaving student, tasked by his female teacher to solve a basic maths problem, fantasises about abducting and cooking her. In *Sniegas* (*The Snow*, 1978) Barysas's character attacks his female companion in an argument. The film closes with a distressed toddler struggling to make its way through deep snow. A metaphor for life's unrelenting challenges, perhaps, but was it necessary to exploit a crying child to make this point?

Although Barysas's films were screened during his lifetime – at festivals or underground events – they were never distributed widely. Some have been lost, while others are beyond repair. 15 surviving 16mm prints have been digitised and published online by the Lithuanian public broadcaster LRT.

The original soundtracks were often collaged from Barysas's own record collection, which made licensing improbable. The project's producers, Robertas Kundrotas and Dovydas Bluvšteinas, commissioned 12 contemporary Lithuanian composers to create music for the films, culminating in the *Baras* LP (Zona Records, 2022). The all-male cast includes established practitioners like Gintas K and Oorchach who navigate industrial beats and black ambiences, while others like Arturas Bumšteinas and Haruspic (Artūras Šlipavičius's duo with saxophonist Vytautas Labutis) take a lighter approach that is perhaps more closely aligned to Barysas's original vision.

Tas Saldus Žodis… (*That Sweet Word…*, 1977) shows Barysas scaling a gate in a vain bid for freedom. This one-minute short encapsulates the late director's struggle to survive amid hostile restrictions imposed by an occupying regime. Despite his problematic personal life, Baras was a genuine auteur. His films deserve wider recognition as they offer alternative vignettes into Lithuanian life during the Soviet era and, being dialogue free, easily transcend linguistic barriers.

Ilia Rogatchevski

Courtesy Art-Film/LRT Mediateka

This Is Sparklehorse
Alex Crowton & Bobby Dass (Directors)
Sad And Beautiful Films 2022, 92 mins

Who gets to tell the story of a musician's rise and fall? Too often, those with the money are the masters who determine an artist's posthumous narrative, as with last year's oversized *Box Of Stars* set of Sparklehorse's albums, overseen by Mark Linkous's longtime label Capitol. But Linkous's story is too complex to be properly commemorated with an expensive vinyl set. Film makers Alex Crowton and Bobby Dass, despite starting out with few funds and no rights to Sparklehorse's music, have crafted *This Is Sparklehorse* around a story that's harder to sell than that of the solitary struggling genius: Linkous's cultivation of a community of like-minded artists.

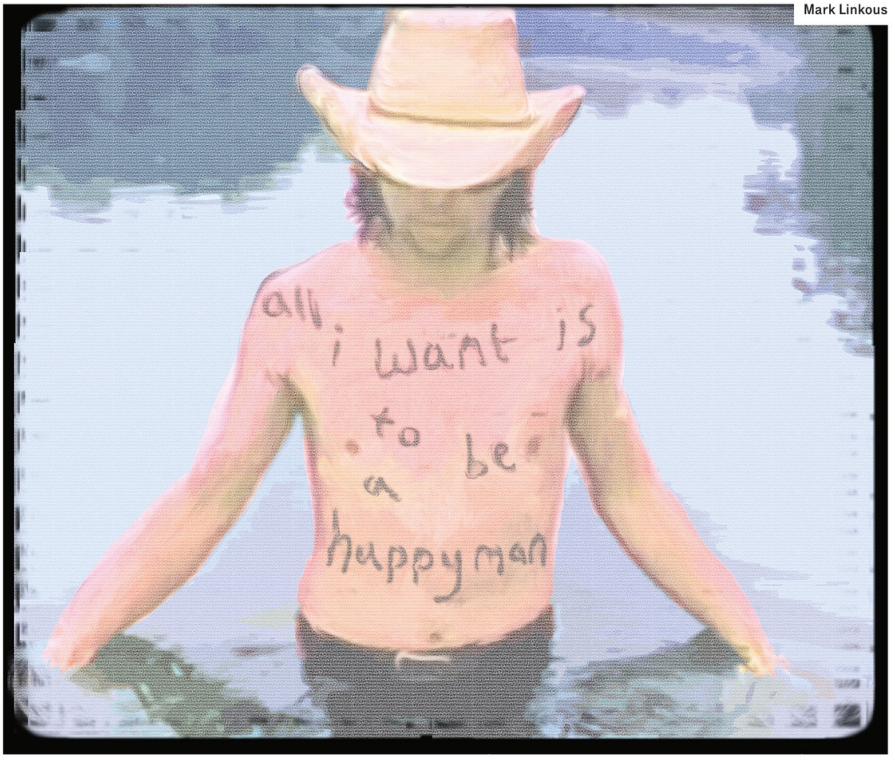
The production of the documentary was beset by all the obstacles one could expect of a self-funded film: rejections from major production companies, catch as catch can interviews recorded with borrowed equipment, legal battles for rights to the music. Because of time and budget constraints, there's nothing formally revolutionary here. *This Is Sparklehorse* is a standard talking heads style documentary filled out with archival footage and B-roll. Despite this, Crowton and Dass have managed to collect personal stories about Linkous from a wide array of his friends and collaborators, including David Lynch, Jonathan Donahue (Mercury Rev), Jason Lytle (Grandaddy), Adrian Utley (Portishead), David Lowery (Camper Van Beethoven), John Parish and Gemma Hayes. More than any biographical revelations, the draw of the documentary is the heartfelt reminiscence of people central to Linkous's music.

Linkous's mythos revolves around his reclusiveness, especially his years living in a remote North Carolina cabin. His frequent collaborations were the necessary converse of this solitude, as others encouraged him to enter the studio and to work through songs that would otherwise gestate for years. Perhaps the most telling anecdote here is when Parish, who produced the landmark *It's A Wonderful Life*, recalls the recording of that album's "Gold Day" as an hours-long process of coaxing the song from an uncommunicative Linkous until the momentum of the track's progress motivated him to finish it. A pattern emerges: recognising Linkous's talent, celebrated artists rally around him, whether it be a tour with Radiohead, a track with Tom Waits, or the massive collaborative album *Dark Night Of The Soul*. The creative work done, Linkous recedes again, out of the party, out of the city, out of touch completely.

Without this cohort of peers, it's unclear how much of Linkous's work we would have. His struggles with depression, alcoholism and drug addiction were exacerbated by a near-overdose in a London hotel room in 1996, which left him in a wheelchair for six months and with chronic pain long afterwards. He then formed a bond with Vic Chesnutt, another southern singer-songwriter who was partially paralysed and served as a role model for a touring musician in a wheelchair. Chesnutt's death on Christmas Day 2009 after an overdose, along with an ongoing separation from his wife, was one of many events preceding Linkous's suicide in March 2010.

The history of these struggles is movingly narrated by Angela-Faye Martin, a fellow singer-songwriter and one of the few visitors to Linkous's North Carolina cabin. Martin's script is written in the second person as a letter to Linkous in which she reminds him of the events of his own life, as if addressing a ghost.

In fact, Linkous's presence in the film is so ethereal that it comes as a shock when he appears onscreen himself in an interview from 2007, as if he's interrupting his own eulogy. Of course Linkous was Sparklehorse, but in many ways the community that sustained him is the true subject of *This Is Sparklehorse*.
Matthew Blackwell



Mark Linkous

Courtesy Bobby Dass & Alex Crowton

Ocen James

Patterns In Between Intelligences

Sheffield's **No Bounds** festival is an exuberant feast of experimental and electronic music. But what about the rest of the year? By **Dan Barrow**

No Bounds 2022
Various venues, Sheffield, UK

Now in its sixth edition, No Bounds has ended up feeding in to one of the more frustrating dynamics in British music. Feast – a glut of events hard to comfortably enjoy in a weekend – follows famine, a near total lack of independent, weirdo or avant garde live music, particularly remarkable given Sheffield's place in electronic music history. Big, short duration celebrations draw in more and more further flung punters than regular gigs that might sustain a community, while even bigger profile venues struggle with corporate landlords – witness the plight of local toilet-circuit veteran The Leadmill, currently threatened with closure.

The opening concert at Sheffield's unimpressive central Cathedral makes the space more playful and thicker in atmosphere. Performance artists Patterns In Between Intelligences rove around the nave in call-centre headsets, their movements of mouths and hands triggering vocal samples that interact, warp and splinter following machine-learning patterns and live laptop processing. Manchester project Blackhaine, amid dry ice and A24 lighting, drops a set of deconstructed drill, with the billowing backwash of huge drums, isolated piano, crashing guitar noise and screams of urban angst inspiring a brief moshpit. Blawan, with an ever more surreal collage film by Berlin artist Bernhard Holaschke rolling behind him, deploys a succession of punishing hard-edged house tracks, the sub-bass acting as a massive architectural force while waves of explosive kicks roil across the audience.

Most of the three nights' dance sets take place at Hope Works, in an area of light-industrial plants to the northeast of the city centre. The curation is very casual, with crude and thrilling double-time jungle sets bumping into jumpy bpm sample-heavy house or instrumental grime; the early evening sets are usually so heavy I bow out before the big name slots kick in around 3–4am. While Helena Hauff cancelled her much anticipated Friday night set, there are strong compensations from Rian Treanor and Ugandan musician Ocen James, who turns Treanor's ascetic take on Tanzanian singeli into a party pivoting to barely predictable drum patterns; and The Black Dog laying down rather crude digital acid.

Saturday starts with some desultory parties around the city centre. At Delicious Clam, one of the very few creative DIY spaces left, duo PC World deliver a set of knowingly ridiculous neo-EBM, singer William Deacon flinging himself among the audience like a distressed peacock. Over at Hope Works, highlights include Black Electric's overwhelming drum 'n' bass, the impure sample house of Palms Trax, and Craig Richards's surprising sampling of old school dubstep.

Sunday night's closing concert at the Cathedral, curated by local celebrity Mark Fell, is presented as a trio of chamber pieces playing with the tradition of minimalism. Newly commissioned works from Nakul Krishnamurthy and Beatrice Dillon play with it rather as a sleepy dog plays with a squeaky toy: making noise and squishing it momentarily but ultimately not changing it much. Dillon's use of a continuous piano line, against which small gestures of bass clarinet, flute, violin and cello move at obtuse angles, makes a rich indistinction between rhythm and drone. Morton Feldman's 90 minute trio piece *Crippled Symmetry* closes. It being one of the greatest works of the last century, what can go wrong? Some passages feel like the necessary tension has slipped between the players' fingers, otherwise its immense, subtle shape emergent out of microscopic, curtailed sounds provides a beautiful ending to an inconsistent weekend. □

James Ward (Patterns In Between Intelligences); Misha Warren (James)

Riot Ensemble

Kings Place, London, UK

Riot Ensemble are one of a handful of ambitious UK new music ensembles founded a decade or so ago and currently coming to maturity. Alongside Explore Ensemble and The Hermes Experiment, they are snapping at the heels of the knackered London Sinfonietta, angling to steal their Arts Council National Portfolio slot once and for all. Riot's offer is a cosmopolitan 21st century Euro modernism, and in an ideal world they'd play this concert in the sinuous folds of the Elbphilhmonie in Hamburg. Sadly we're in the UK, not Germany, so a conference centre in the basement of a WeWork space will have to do.

The concert starts with the ensemble above the audience on the balcony that surrounds the auditorium for Anna Korsun's piece *Ulenflucht*. Out of the silence comes very quiet humming, and Korsun artfully mixes the trained and semi-trained voices of the ensemble (mostly instrumentalists rather than singers) to produce an aviary of bird-like sound. The singers gradually open their mouths and the increasingly full and deep chorus takes on a simian quality – a highly controlled passage of morphing animal ventriloquism. But the piece loses focus as Korsun adds auxiliary instruments – bird and animal calls, harmonicas, plastic tubes – to the texture and I am left with a vision of the composer rummaging through a toy box and haphazardly handing out toys.

Naomi Pinnock's *(it looks like someone lived there)* sets a piece of text from Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*. It is quiet and slow with long pauses between statements of material largely characterised by bowed metal percussion and string harmonics. The material is too anaemic to sustain this kind of Wandelweiser type structure, soprano Sarah Dacey strangled throughout by the half-swallowed pointillism of her part.

David Del Tredici's *Syzygy* sets text from two poems by James Joyce. As you can see from this programme, there is something of a trend for composers to interpret these hoary modernist texts. Neither Pinnock nor Del Tredici get close to the illuminating power of, say, Rebecca Saunders's settings of Molly Bloom's monologue at the end of *Ulysses*, notably in her piece *YES*. The Joyce in *Syzygy* is comprehensively unilluminated: inaudible throughout and seemingly totally unrelated to the musical setting. Riot gamely crash through the score but the brittle writing never lifts off the page.

The premiere of Alastair Putt's *Quincunx* concludes the concert. The performance, delayed due to the pandemic, is sharply poignant, coming so soon after Putt killed himself this past summer. In this piece for cello quintet Putt emphasises the sonorous depths of the ensemble. The idiom is condensed but often plainspoken and direct, reminiscent of the early 20th century music British music of Vaughan Williams and Walton.

Putt gives full, expressive lines to the ensemble, the viola especially climbing out of the texture for a surprising solo (Richard Jones on excellent form). The playing is the best of the night – controlled and intense, hard-edged and crystalline. A moving tribute to the late composer.

Edward Henderson

Gonerfest 19

Railgarten, Memphis, US

Memphis, Tennessee is a 20 hour drive from my house in rural Massachusetts, and having grown up in the Northeastern US, my knowledge of the American South is minimal. This has changed in recent years as my visits to the region have been happily scheduled around potent musical events. Sadly, since Ponderosa Stomp in New Orleans and Louisville's Cropped Out fest have both called it quits, my reasons to visit have diminished lately.

That said, there was no way I was going to skip an opportunity to see the Rev Fred Lane doing a rare live show at Gonerfest. Of course, Gonerfest is always a gas. Memphis is full of great eats (the chopped pork sandwich at Payne's and the Cornish game hen at Cozy Corner being particular standouts), the town still hasn't been bulldozed to accommodate yuppie IT scum (unlike Nashville and Austin), and bands come from all over the globe to play. Now that Gonerfest has relocated to a single location – a large indoor/outdoor compound with drinks, food and all the trimmings – it runs for up to 12 hours straight each of its four days, providing almost more dandy-ass music than a single brain can handle.

Highlights this year are many and varied. Despite her folkie rep, Philadelphia's Rosali plays a killer rock set, backed by David Nance's band, giving off alternative universe Lucinda Williams vibes. San Francisco's Shannon & The Clams bring their unique roots/yodel/glam-stomp blend to a full and insane boil. AWFM (A Weirdo From Memphis) plays with a large electric band, giving his bunny-suited hiphop gymnastics some totally crazed funk width. Austin's Spray Paint bear down into razor sharp post-punk trio dynamism hinting at both The Urinals and Naked Raygun. Montreal's Tha Retail Simps do great slopped-out garage rock recalling The Fugs as much as The Gizmos. Melbourne's Michael Beach plays a solid set of the loud, sweet ballads that make his records so cool. And on and on. The only bum notes all weekend are the cracks of thunder that drive us off a bit early on Saturday night.

But the true toast of the fest is Rev Fred Lane & His Disheveled Monkeybiters. Having been lucky enough to catch the band's soundcheck in the morning, my pump was primed. But the splendour of the actual set is overwhelming. The band are solid as hell. Horns, strings, keys, background vocals all lock in to create a hip vortex amid which the Rev could belt out his wild lyrics.

Lane's vocal approach rolls classic jazz hipsterism (Lord Buckley, Slim Gaillard, Harry Gibson) into that of The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band's Vivian Stanshall and 'Legs' Larry Smith, then adds a touch of Col Bruce Hampton's pure Southern madness, dunking the whole doughnut into the Brunswick Stew of Alabama surrealism from which it came. Total swinging madness.

The music is an insanely apt accompaniment – sleazy lounge basics with avant and good-timey edging that make me think of certain aspects of Carla Bley's 1970s work as well as The Willem Breuker Kollektief. When Fred rips into his latest classic "I'm Going to Go To Hell (When I Die)", the audience's mood achieves an ecstatic level that should be bottled and sold as a tonic. It's as fine as fine could be.

As indeed is the whole weekend. And *that* is what I like about the South.

Byron Coley

Malcy Duff And His Trouser Orchestra + Ecka Mordecai/Ash Reid/Fritz Welch + Rob Churm

Cafe Oto, London, UK

As well as being one half of Edinburgh's favourite dadaist micro-improv duo, Usurper, Malcy Duff is a cartoonist devoted to interrogating the possibilities of sequential storytelling through word and image. His comics are deeply weird, often very funny and truly experimental, using painstakingly detailed line drawings to create unsettling dream-like situations often involving grotesque characters, skewed perspectives and deadening repetition.

In the last couple of years, he has co-created two editions of the split comic *The Floating Bridge*, with Glasgow based cartoonist Rob Churm, whose visions are equally hallucinatory, employing bold and dynamic abstract action imagery augmented by frequently hilarious textual non-sequiturs. Together with Texan born, longtime Glasgow resident, percussionist and improvisor Fritz Welch, they present an evening of performances exploring unexpected intersections of sounds and words.

Churm's set, based on his strip *The Researchers*, has him standing between a laptop and Oto's back wall, using an extremely effective video feedback and visual sampling technique to project time-lag snapshots of himself holding up various monochromatic drawings and slogans, each repeating a few times before giving way to the next.

Churm further fuzzes things up by adding an electronic accompaniment of harsh menagerie sounds and his own spoken interjections, while playing a recording of an intimate conversation on the nature of *"the line"* in drawing, which yield such nuggets of wisdom as *"when you're hungover, you can really do some crackers"*. Ending with a reading of a text by poet Roberto Pastore from the point of view of a naïve extraterrestrial observer, it is both silly and oddly moving in its disarming simplicity.

Welch convenes a first-time collaboration with two London based artists, cellist/improvisor Ecka Mordecai and writer/performer Ash Reid. Stood behind an upended bass drum, Welch uses forks, sticks, gongs and various implements to summon scratch, crackle and boom from the drum skin, while Mordecai offers throbbing counterpoint. Reid drags a chair across the floor, creating a sepulchral scrape before arriving at the mic to read pataphysical material inspired by Alfred Jarry, interspersed with an account of a séance delivered with a ghoulish, pitched-down modulation.

Aficionados of the occult might also recognise that the several minutes Reid spends chewing up scraps of text and spitting them out – in close enough proximity to the mic to generate a wet, mandibular commentary – is a tribute to the early 20th century fraudulent medium Eva Carrière, who used the same method to produce fake ectoplasm. Welch wraps up the improvisation by reading from a long scroll of his own writings, deadpanning bon mots such as *"I do my best work when I'm alive"*.

Duff's piece *The Simpsons* is what he calls a live comic – a combination of drawing, sound and performance created specifically for a live audience. The narrative, such as it is, concerns a Kafkaesque transformation involving a mysterious, ineluctable yellowing of the protagonist – eliciting guffaws when Duff, goggle-eyed and hair wildly a-frizz, holds up two bunches of bananas and exclaims, "Just look at my gloves!"

Throughout, he flips over a series of indecipherable illustrations until, as a finale, Welch and Churm join his Trouser Orchestra, with each of the three wrangling a pair of sturdy close-miked strides, coaxing a quiet symphony of fabric sounds with straight-faced determination.

It's ridiculous, gloriously nonsensical and a quintessentially British slice of absurdist humour. Give that man a TV show.

Daniel Spicer

Aiko Devriendt

Splitter Orchester

Meakusma

Various venues, Eupen, Belgium

Meakusma has had a rough few years, cancelled in 2020 by the pandemic and then again in 2021 due to devastating floods in eastern Belgium. As a result, this year's edition is not only back, but expanded, with a full four day programme covering five rooms in the Alter Schlachthof complex, a nearby art museum and venues across the town, including the imposing Friedenskirche and an abandoned shopping centre. There are plenty of outlets for the pent up party energy of the past few years: an outdoor dance tent in the camping area behind Alter Schlacthof grooves on into the evening, while the slightly rickety hotbox dance stage Heuboden pulsates and rattles until the sun comes up.

I arrive on Friday to catch Holy Tongue – drummer Valentina Magaletti's trio with Al Wooton and Susumu Mukai – as they fill the room with a dubby set full of muscular gongs, space-battle synth zings and parps, and the sound of rattling sticks dragged across a fence as they settle into a gallop that provokes cheers from the crowd. Over in Heuboden, Nosedrip, the mastermind behind the Stroom label, is playing a mix of weirdo 1980s inflected pop spliced with the doof doof of a 4/4 kickdrum, some 808 handclaps and bursts of Arabic singing. It's an energetic, exuberant mess, and good fun.

Meanwhile, Head Of Colin's set is more reflective: imagine African Head Charge mixed with 90s optimism, a dash of Underworld's "Born Slippy" and a hint of Tyler, The Creator in lovesick crooning mode, all set to an overenthusiastic smoke machine. Grid Ravage's set for drums, cello and Yves De May's electronics morphs from a skulking, noirish slink into a chorus of imagined bird sounds, and Rezzett freak out with a set of Rinse FM-style breakbeat skitter, shifting from scuzzy to slick.

Saturday morning starts off with a modular synth set by Aymeric de Tapol at the IKOB art museum, generating subtle shifts in tone that resonate in the concrete space, and simple loops that build with speed and urgency until beeping, chiptune-like polyrhythms emerge. Nick Malkin follows with sludgy ambient that sounds like footfalls through a swamp, and Aiko Devriendt, whose collaborative partner Maika Garnica is absent, works with keyboard triggered samples of her ceramic instruments – the results are texturally interesting, even if their improvisational flow is lost. The EC band have plenty of that flow – combining synth whooshes with Ash Ra Tempel meditative guitar, and a clash of cymbals and percussion that sounds like someone very slowly tipping a tray of tuning forks onto the floor. Orange Milk's Loto Retina, meanwhile, scrambles computer glitch cut-ups with baby voice pop trills repeated like a key-mashed cry for help.

Turntablist Ignaz Schick and drummer Oliver Steidle participate in a sweaty duel between pugilistic beats and vinyl cut-ups of fireworks and radio static spun backwards, forwards and sideways on the decks. Elsewhere A Trio are absolutely triumphant, transmogrifying their instruments so that a trumpet is hooked up to a bowl and a long bit of plastic tubing, and the bassist is blowing on metal sticks stuck through the frets of his instrument, or playing it with what look like smushed metal casings for mince pies. They lock in and out of sync with each other with the ease of longtime collaborators, even when making ridiculous noises (at one point the plastic tubing on the trumpet sounds like someone taking an extended leak), but there's a sense of timing, wonder and play to their set that avoids any improv cliches. I could watch them all day.

In the early hours of the morning, composer Madalyn Merkey's live computer music is a space for otherworldly contemplation. Her music is multidimensional, more aligned to waves of texture and figures rotating through physical space than any reliance on loops and oscillations yoked to the flatness of the grid. She layers pulses and sweeps with a lightness of touch that allows chirps and whistles to emerge like inquisitive space creatures feeling out and tracing a relief map of a new planet. At the end of her performance, some members of the audience spontaneously burst into a chorus of whistles in response. It's like The Clangers' version of holding up lighters during a stadium rock ballad.

Sunday morning proper, Lilly Joel plays the organ in the Friedenskirche – a preview of an album recorded here. Drones and helicoptering bass mesh with a lush swell of overtones wafting above, and Joel sings with a flutey echo, sometimes extending phrases into the tortured multisyllabic phrasing of Björk. Tinkling, bell like phrases appear over religious chants and choruses, punctuated by chimes and kettle whistles. An odd mix, but full of sombre mystery.

From the church to the town's dead mall, Splitter Orchester have taken over in a 40-strong formation of improvisors, including a thereminist and a musician with a set of tape loops – they look like a well-organised street market, set up in a circle for audience members to walk around. Clusters of players emerge to take the spotlight, and they come and go without friction; individual turns surprise, but the whole thing flows. Everyone is facing in different directions, yet they seem to operate on some kind of magical telepathy.

Later, composer Maya Shenfield's set of stately computer drones is trance inducing, and she's followed by a boisterous, physical set by pianist Tania Chen and percussionist Le Quan Ninh, in which both artists make use of all surfaces of their instruments: Ninh scraping the edges of cymbals and rolling drum surfaces with pinecones, and Chen playing below and inside the piano, and turning a roll of sellotape into an instrument of its own. It's a fitting end to a festival full of such unexpected delights.

Emily Bick

Maika Garnica (Aiko Devriendt); Geert Coppens (Splitter Orchester)

Other Minds Festival

Great Star Theater, San Francisco, US

The 26th annual Other Minds Festival brings some of the world's most adventurous composers, instrument designers and sound artists together for a three night event in a historic opera house in San Francisco's Chinatown – culminating in a US premiere of Dominic Murcott's *The Harmonic Canon*, performed by Seattle's arx duo on a specially designed 450 kilogram bell which had to be shipped overseas for the performance.

I attend the first night, which features cellist and vocalist Theresa Wong, violinist and electronic instrument designer Mari Kimura, and a duo performance from composers Raven Chacon and Guillermo Galindo. The evening begins with a casual conversation with all the artists hosted by executive and artistic director Charles Amirkhanian. This format allows for discussion and clarification of aspects of their work which might not have been immediately obvious from their sets, like a demonstration of Kimura's technique for using subharmonics to reach notes not ordinarily playable on violin, as well as a presentation of her MUGIC® (Music/User Gesture Interface Control) device, a motion sensor worn in a glove on her bowing hand.

After a break, Wong performs her piece *Fluency Of Trees*. She opens with a low drone, coaxing notes from the cello that ripple like waves on a dark sea. Her voice joins the drone with a midrange *"ooo"* hovering above the darkness. As it builds to a climax, her fingers whip and scrape across the strings, while she murmurs flitting, zipping little syllables that move like the voices of birds. Eventually these sounds give way to snippets of recognisable language, variously in Chinese, Italian and English.

Kimura's set comprises four shorter pieces. The first, *JanMaricana*, is an exercise in extended technique in which Kimura makes her violin creak and rasp, squick and gleam. For *D'Alembert Caprice*, she puts on her electronic glove, allowing for the gestures made by her wrist to be electronically sonified. *Motion Notions (Dai Fujikura)* fills the room with quivering, science fictiony tones. Finally, for *Rossby Waving*, a screen descends from above the stage, where projections of real world footage mingle with pure abstraction in a manner that mirrors the music.

After a brief intermission, Chacon and Galindo take their places at a pair of long tables filled with intriguing implements. A swell of electronics sweeps through the room like a desert wind, eventually causing the entire theatre to rumble with throbbing sub-bass frequencies. Tangled masses of electronics gather like storm clouds as samples are brought in and out of the howling mix. As Chacon plays an array of whistles, flutes and other breath-based instruments, Galindo places a microphone inside the head of a painted drum, moving it toward and away from a speaker to generate oscillations of feedback.

Through their multimedia art practices, both Chacon, who is Diné, and Galindo, who refers to himself as "post-Mexican" grapple with ongoing histories of colonial violence in North America. With this collaborative performance, these two Indigenous artists conjure a sonic world as vast and sacred as the continent itself.

Emily Pothast

Skaņu Mežs: 20th Anniversary

Various venues, Riga, Latvia

Skaņu Mežs – Latvian for forest of sound – is the biggest avant garde and experimental music festival in the Baltics. Now in its 20th year, it has become an institution, attracting concertgoers from all over the world. Despite its humble beginnings, the festival's scope was wildly ambitious from the start, booking composer Bernard Parmegiani in its first year of existence. Since then, the hundreds of artists hosted by Skaņu Mežs include Francois Bayle, Fushitsusha, Squarepusher, Autechre, Roscoe Mitchell, Grouper, Alvin Lucier, Julia Holter and Charlemagne Palestine.

Another welcome surprise is the high quality of the acoustic experience. There are a lot of intriguing venues in Europe that were never meant to be venues – converted from abandoned factories, say, or crumbling transit stations – but very few of them have truly great sound. At Hanzas Perons, a soaring, spacious venue that used to be a freight railway station, the atmosphere is electric. The high walls are carefully lined with numerous speakers, fine-tuned for an enveloping surround sound experience. After a few sobering years of pandemic solitude, it's at once energising and exhilarating to be back in a massive room like this.

That feeling is reflected in the musicians, many of whom tell me that they are just now returning to playing at international festivals after a few years away. The 20th anniversary line-up includes Space Afrika, clipping, Amirtha Kidambi and Matt Evans, Yuko Araki, Perc, Russell Haswell, [Ahmed], Chris Corsano and Lotte Anker, M Caye Castagnetto with Angel Body Import, and Alya al-Sultani and Mariam Rezaei.

The exacting sonic set-up heightens the experience for all of the acts, and it is also absolutely necessary for one of the 20th anniversary festival highlights: a tribute to Parmegiani, who passed away in 2013.

François Bonnet, the current director of Ina-GRM, plays a stunning live diffusion of a few Parmegiani pieces, including the kaleidoscopic and hallucinatory *L'instant Mobile* from 1971, and the steely and striking *Immer/Sounds* (1999) created for 16 channels. He also plays two of his own works as Kassel Jaeger – *Erosions*, written in 2018 for 20 channels, and an older piece called *Algae*.

There are too many other highlights to count, including Amirtha Kidambi and Matt Evans, who fashion together a brilliant live set using borrowed instruments after having lost all their gear in transit to Riga; [Ahmed], whose delicate improvised music charms the crowd; and the Latvian power electronics band Zahnrad, who create a cocoon of dark ambience with hazy visuals and mesmerizing soundscapes.

The vibe on the streets of Riga feels muted. Latvia is only about 800 kilometres from Ukraine, and it shares a border with Belarus. A few days before the festival, Russia announced that the war would be ratcheted up to even higher levels, and once again it was hinted that a nuclear attack was not off the table. Ukrainian flags are everywhere in Riga, along with a huge array of signs displaying solidarity with the Ukrainian cause. Ukraine is on everyone's minds and in everyone's hearts.

"Fuck Putin!" Haswell screams during his high powered live set, bathed in stark white and red light and pushing his electronics with pounding, manic intensity. Backstage after the set, he is just as intense as he was on stage. "I'm from Coventry, the second hardest place in the world," he declares – one hell of a claim, to be sure.

Skaņu Mežs is like therapy – a salve for the bitterness of the world. One hopes for more adventurous, openhearted festivals like this, and that Skaņu Mežs will continue pursuing its creative vision of a forest of sound.

Geeta Dayal

The Hearing Experience

Iklectik, London, UK

In a pithy 2007 piece of writing entitled "Against Soundscape", social anthropologist Tim Ingold takes that trustiest of terms in the music journalist's utility belt to task. "We need to avoid the trap," he argues, "of supposing that the power of hearing inheres in recordings." Instead, he advocates a more experiential conception of listening located in the living, sensing, fleshy body. A compatible sentiment underlies *The Hearing Experience* EP on London label SA Recordings, for which four artists were invited to produce a piece exploring listening as an act. Following its August release, they assembled here for an evening uncoupling the music from the recorded medium.

Lola de la Mata finds inspiration for her piece in her struggles with tinnitus, a 'sound' which is unique for being heard but never emitted. If the searing whines on the EP version of "KOH - Klee – uh" (referencing the ear's cochlea bone) recall the austere sinewaves of Sachiko M, in person her Canna Sanora, a rare acoustic instrument comprising metal poles rubbed with resin-covered gloves, hums with unexpected richness. As tinnitus melts into the quotidian racket, so the dog whistle tones in time nestle unobtrusively alongside double bass groans and pucks. Visuals display the ear as a sensing receptor which can never close. De la Mata's sounds pass momentarily through these channels like everything else, but there's something heartening to this communal, externalised investigation of a normally intensely isolating condition.

An instinct towards mimesis is similarly formative to Damsel Elysium's work, which uses echolalia – a neurodivergent-associated habit of repeating encountered sounds – to explore the sensory overstimulations of the modern metropolis. Amid double bass thumbings and urban recordings, a subjective chaos emerges as Damsel Elysium imitates whatever sounds happen to register on their consciousness. One piece involves them pausing to listen to the bells jingling from the speakers. A trombonist materialises from behind the crowd, traceable by the sound of the instrument's puffs. As Damsel Elysium dances to the music, we're invited to understand their listening as performance.

Tara Clerkin Trio's set constitutes a protracted take on their EP composition *Exquisite Corpse 1*. Already a fractured work broaching a clutch of styles, played live it sticks a little in its transitions, with awkward moments more than once salvaged by an assuringly head-bobbing boom bap beat. Clearly, however, they're having fun, as the group linger on a silly sort of rhythm, while leaning into music that feels social rather than crystalline and consummate.

Astrid Sonne's closing set similarly charms through its imperfections. She gyrates from side to side behind her table, guiding us from sawing buzzy synths and woodpecker knocks through folky field recordings that make you feel oddly conscious of the positioning of your ears as they oscillate around the speaker system. Its multitextured build-up lurches from obtuse tactility to washed out filter effects, when the music suddenly cuts out as a climax nears and Sonne lets out a panicked "Fuck!". In the end she receives the most enthusiastic applause of the evening, having ironically attested to the contextual, social, spatial and interruptible dimensions of listening – dimensions which the alienating prepackaged perfection of much recorded music would have us overlook.

Alec Holt

Amina Claudine Myers

Charlemagne Palestine

FutureStops

Various venues, Toronto, Canada

It says something about the powerful transcendence of the pipe organ that free thinkers would knowingly commit themselves to sitting on upright hardwood benches designed to keep sinners humble in order to indulge in the instrument's enveloping glory. But come they do for the opening night of the first FutureStops festival, produced by the Royal Canadian College of Organists and held in two churches and a concert hall in downtown Toronto.

The festival is billed as "the 21st Century Organ Experience", which is fair enough as few of the artists on the programme were even making organ music in the 20th century. Between backlit stained glass, Ontario born Kara-Lis Coverdale opens the first of the three nights in the beautiful and darkened Cathedral Church of St James. Her set is quiet, like unmoored hymns with Debussian phrases occasionally floating in. French composer Thomas Mellan follows. His set includes a setting of "Past Tense" by the Swedish metal band Meshuggah. Novelty aside, it's dramatic and lyrical, a single line growing bolder as it seemingly punctures through paper skin. In near darkness Kali Malone plays her own works, joined at the end by Sunn O)))'s Stephen O'Malley (with whom she has also recorded). Her strict compositions, built from a few fixed intervals with no undue complication, are sublime and captivating.

The second day falls on Canada's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, honouring the injustices done to the original inhabitants of the land, and opens with Diné (Navajo) composer Raven Chacon's *Voiceless Mass* at Roy Thomson Hall. The piece, played by Toronto's Arraymusic, is enormous and orchestral despite its small scale: nine instrumentalists including two percussionists plus the organ. The lonely cries of the strings and an understated authority of the drums make a powerful impact that isn't overplayed. Rashaan Rori Allwood plays his own *In Memory Of…*, a work that calls for the performer to shout the name of a victim of oppression (the dedication here is to Masha Amini).

Amina Claudine Myers closes the second night with the third full performance ever of *The Improvisational Suite For Chorus, Pipe Organ And Percussion* (1979), Myers conducting from the organ console onstage. The choir start off singing wordless melodies and eventually make their way to one of the rare sacred moments in the festival.

A matinee set on the final day in the lobby of Thomson Hall brings performances on homemade organs by FUJI||||||||||TA and Sandra Boss, the former playing hand-pumped pipes and shō. In the evening, we're at Metropolitan United Church for Sarah Davachi, Matthew Larkin and Charlemagne Palestine.

Davachi works the low registers more like an electromagnetic field than tonal passages. With immaculate slowness, she adds single notes atop each other, one at a time and slowly ascending. Organs don't demand dirge-like temples but, at least in her hands, they certainly reward them. Palestine closes the festival with an unusual ritual devoid of pomp, easily the loudest and most monolithic performance of the weekend.

In the end, it's a festival less about virtuosity – although plenty of it is on display, particularly in performances by Allwood and Mathew Larkin – than about conception and grandeur of the instrument. During an afternoon talk, Malone speaks of the possibility that a younger generation dedicated to the pipe organ may no longer being cultivated, what with churches being closed and their organs dismantled. At the exhibition stands outside the concerts, however, a representative from a Montreal company says they are increasingly being called to create new models and innovative installations in Europe, lamenting that they don't get such commissions in North America.

Maybe such designs will inspire a new generation to play and care for the these massive, centuries-old instruments that sit among us.

Kurt Gottschalk

Terry Day & Friends: Celebrating The Archives

Cafe Oto, London, UK

Shortly before the music starts, George Khan can be seen sat among the audience in a three piece suit, clutching both his alto flute and alto sax and talking in animated fashion. He's clearly primed and ready to spring into action alongside his longterm associates: Terry Day, Mike Figgis and Charlie Hart. All four are free jazzers with a visual art twist. And all of them worked among the People Show theatre company from 1965–72, as People Band. People Show were a glowing example of the golden years of UK fringe theatre, Cockney surrealists par excellence. Amazingly, the company still exists, and Khan is one of their core artists.

Tonight is a celebration of the Terry Day Archives, meaning that Blanca Regina, curator of the Unpredictable Series, is steadily adding Day's discography to a Cafe Oto archive. Not that anyone speaks of such things – instead, Regina and Steve Beresford chat some amusing nonsense by way of introducing the acts, and speculate whether John Coltrane might have kept practising while in the toilet. Beresford: "That might be a myth." Then the GK4 (George Khan Quartet) take to the stage, and slip straight inside the music like a man into a well-tailored suit.

What a group they are, endlessly responsive to each other and exhilaratingly openended. The music is freedom incarnate but not especially wild; it has an easygoing gravitas and lyrical quality. They bring what you hope for with players of this vintage, a supreme confidence that generates forward momentum. Mike Figgis has had a sideline as a major film director since the 1990s. Tonight he contributes filmic string synth pads (from an iPad), sounding fresh and keeping things simple. Later he moves to bottleneck electric guitar, maintaining his less is more approach. He doesn't look in perfect health, and appears to be blowing a cornet through a black facemask, but his interventions are incisive and to the point.

Khan has a rich, warm sound on his horns and Hart's bass worries away at one pitch area after another. Each player joyfully surfs across Day's drumming, even as he is leaving large amounts of space. He is concerned with maximising colour from his kit, especially the toms. Bright red brushes as soft as handkerchiefs flicker in the stage lights. One delightful move involves spitting into his hand and rubbing sharply down the stick – this dramatically concludes the first number. Later Day seduces the audience by running around his whole kit with a J-cloth – looks wild, but it's effectively silent, and also a showstopper. Surely only Terry Day could pull this off, bringing down the house with a silent gesture.

After a break Charlie Hart plays a violin solo. Starting from a long, aching note, he's repeatedly drawn back to the same pitch via complex excursions into somewhat Irish or Greek phrases. As befits someone who has played regularly with Ian Dury and Ronnie Lane, Hart presents the music with winning showmanship and a big ending.

The evening concludes with a duet by Rosey Chan on piano and Blanca Regina on a table-load of small instruments. If Chan's technique is undeniable, it's questionable whether her determined sentimentality really meshes with Regina's playful sallies. But it's nice to see Day on the kit once again when he joins them as a guest.

Clive Bell

Green Yang

Juliet Fraser: *Wave Songs*

City University, London, UK

As part of City University's laudable free concert series, soprano Juliet Fraser presents three works for voice and electronics. Lasting around an hour, the condensed nature of the programme is reflected in the evening's visual presentation, the stage bare apart from speakers, music stand and Fraser herself, the lighting causing her shadow to triple into a series of overlapping ghosts.

It's an appropriate figure, as all three works' play with live-ness and prerecording – calmly and methodically in Alvin Lucier's *Wave Songs*, noisily, shatteringly in Nwando Ebizie's *I Birth The Moon*, and with a kind of melancholic implacability in Newton Armstrong's *The Book Of The Sediments*, the latter two pieces world premieres forming part of Fraser's cycle of commissions based on the work of Rachel Carson's *Sea Trilogy*.

Lucier's piece for voice and oscillators, commissioned in response to Lee Lozano's *Wave Paintings* in 1998 and first performed by Joan La Barbara, has so far never been officially recorded. Lucier sets live vocals alongside sinewaves to create beating effects, generating phantom rhythms, at once static and pulsing with movement. In its 11 short movements, the piece achieves the remarkable feat of generating a soundworld that's extremely quiet – at points, it seems that every audience twitch can be heard – even as it totally fills the space of perception.

As she remarks in her programme note, Ebizie's *I Birth The Moon* was constructed in collaboration with Fraser during "a day of walking in the Yorkshire moors, talking, eating and improvising", layering Rachel Carson's writing on the ocean with "the experience of miscarriage, the hopes, the fears of birth, the absurdity of the body vs the strong will to create, the 'I' wanting to become we".

Over the course of the piece, electronically treated multiplying voices and clattering percussion constantly draw the music away from ready reference. A soprano wail morphs into a digital whirr; a burst of laughter into a back of throat gurgle, then a long, high melodic line. The piece ends suddenly on an inhaled breath, poised between beginning and ending.

In Armstrong's *The Book Of The Sediments*, instrumental treatment of the electronic lines likewise points to their acousmatic uncanniness. Are those horns? Woodwinds? Strings? Electronic tones? Though it takes inspiration from Carson's description of the build-up of oceanic sediment, which she described as an "epic poem of the earth", the work feels as much like a melancholic winding down in an era of anxieties fostered by climate change, pandemic and political catastrophe. Towards the end, Fraser holds her hands together, a gesture of benediction or protection, while, over the speakers, sounds somewhere between the ocean and a dripping tap uneasily fade away.

How, ask these three pieces in their different ways, does embodiment shape perception? What is time? Where are we positioned in relation to phenomena, to each other, to the world? These may be, in Lee Lozano's words set in the tenth of Lucier's *Wave Songs*, *"science idea[s] transferred to art idea[s]"*, but they are also incessantly philosophical, social and political.

After Armstrong's piece ends, the applause sounds alien, strange, like rain gone wrong. And this is a concert that alters the space in which it was placed; one that might take us back out into the world with a different sense of how we walk through it, of where we go from here.

David Grundy

Unsound

Various venues, Krakow, Poland

The venue at Poczta Główna has that post-Soviet chic. Old parquet floor creaks, celebration flags, heavy velvet red curtains and lines of ventilators decorate the walls. It served as a club where the post office workers and clerks used to drink after their shift because Krakow's main post office resides in the same building. On this occasion a hulking figure playing double bass only adds to the robustness of the scene. Polish bassist Ksawery Wójciński, who combines influences from classical composition, jazz and folk music, fills the space with sylvan melancholy. He plays his instrument sparingly, creating moments of stillness bracketed by reverberating strings which resonate with the acoustics of the hall.

History and memory are a resonant theme of the 20th edition of Unsound, even though its official theme is "Bubbles". During the festival's official opening speeches, founder Mat Schulze and executive director Gosia Plysa recall its DIY beginnings, and how the city has changed over time.

The evening then belongs to two new commissions. London based composer Wojciech Rusin joins forces with Kraków's Spółdzielnia Muzyczna contemporary ensemble and soprano Jolanta Kowalska-Pawlikowska to stage music from his latest album *Syphon*. On record, what makes his digital alchemy so special is the sense of the uncanny generated by his synthetic reimagination of medieval music. With the ensemble, however, the string section dosn't leave much space for Rusin's 3D-printed flutes around which the album is based, and something is lost in the process. A more minimalist setting would make a better fit for the composer, what with his reputation as a garage inventor.

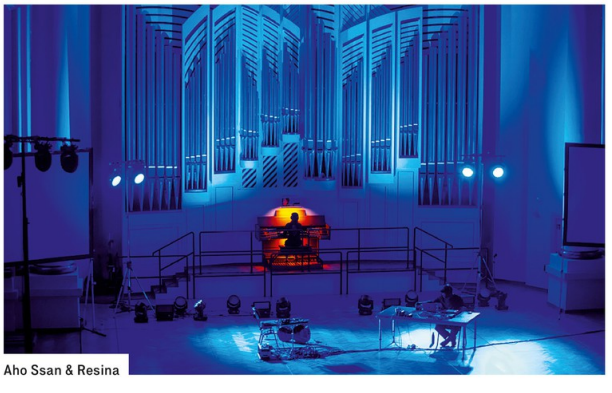
The collaborative project *Ego Death* by Warsaw based cellist and composer Resina and Subtext-affiliated producer Aho Ssan fills the hall with a maelstrom of heavy sound. Resina's looped and processed strings layer the noise over Aho Ssan's heavy bass bottoms and electronic textures, as the piece gradually reaches full force. At one moment, however, the hall is blanketed in silence, only interrupted by Resina's anxious breaths, before she walks to the majestic 50 pipe organ and summons massive drones.

Unsound has always made full use of the city. So-called Morning Glory performances – offering ambient music and coffee – take place in the auditorium for medical students at the Old University Hospital. Here's where Ukrainian media archaeologist and Muscot label founder Dmytro Nikolaienko delivers a lecture on hauntology while manipulating tapes on vintage Nagra 4.2 and Uher 4000 recorders.

The warehouse spaces at Hype Park, meanwhile, are reserved for night shows like South Korean producer bela's, which turns nongak, a traditional form of Korean folk music, into *Silent Hill* horror. Bela strafes the audience with a flashlight while blasting them with fearful black metal roars and nerve-wracking noises. Egyptian producer ABADIR cheers the crowd with hybrid beats that mesh jungle, footwork and Jersey club with popular Arabic rhythms played at weddings and pop songs. His set is even more enjoyable with the addition of Turkish percussionist Hogir Göregen playing darbuka and riq drums.

Unsound's Bubbles theme can mean champagne and celebration, but it also suggests echo chambers that divide society. A discussion hosted by critic Philip Sherburne reads the theme to mean genre bubbles. Genres can be traditionally connected to race, power and oppression, along with practical reasons for categorisation. One of his panellists – Catalonian art-pop musician Marina Herlop – declares, "When a genre is established, it needs to be broken." A few hours later at Teatr Łaźnia Nowa she lives up to her words. Playing alongside a percussionist and two vocalists, the set opens with Kenji Kawai's symphonic music for *Ghost In The Shell* and follows it with tracks from Herlop's album *Pripyat*. As realised by her live band, her sonic wonderland of chopped pianos, trilling melodies, glitched beats and blissful vocals feels more communal, overwhelming and fantastical. Just so, the 20th Unsound festival, which managed to merge disparate sound bubbles rather than keep them apart.

Miloš Hroch

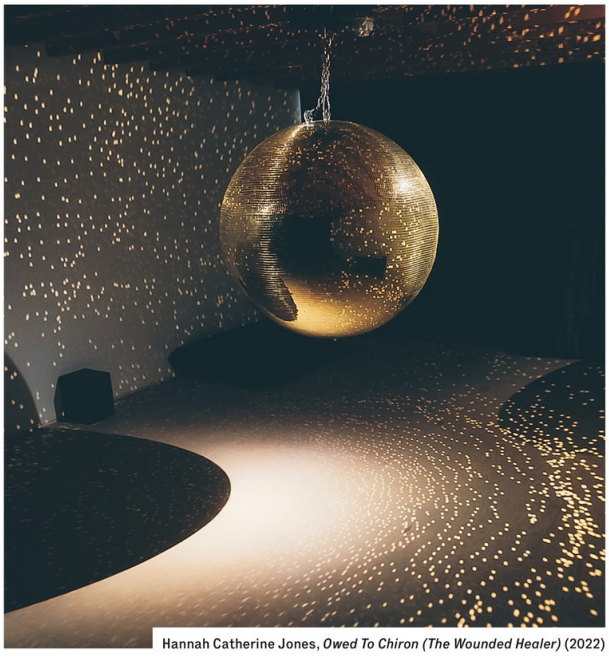


Aho Ssan & Resina

Zuza Sosnowska

On Site

Exhibitions, installations, etc



Hannah Catherine Jones, *Owed To Chiron (The Wounded Healer)* (2022)

Hannah Catherine Jones
OWED TO CHIRON (The Wounded Healer)
Mimosa House, London, UK

For their first solo exhibition in the UK, artist, scholar and multi-hyphenate musician Dr Hannah Catherine Jones has taken over Mimosa House, transforming the gallery into a sensory journey designed to decolonise inherited assumptions and provide space for introspection, healing and growth. The artist uses sound works and video projections, plants, fragrant oils, herbal teas, drawing and sculptural assemblage to illuminate the connections shared between displaced diasporic 'others' and explore the restorative qualities of sound.

The experience is structured around works from Jones's ongoing series, *The Oweds*, a title that plays on the Greco-Roman poetic form ode and refers to overdue reparations owed to colonised peoples. OWED TO CHIRON investigates the metaphorical potentials of Chiron as a symbol of queerness and healing; Chiron is a body in the outer reaches of our solar system that defies classification, its name taken from Greek myth, a centaur with special abilities in music, botany and medicine. In astrology, Chiron is known as the wounded healer. Leveraging these concepts, Jones connects the immediate senses – sound, sight, smell, taste, touch – to ideas in the realms of the cosmic, spiritual, universal.

The journey starts in the foyer space with Growth"; adorned with plants, there's a station offering complimentary herbal tea and a recording of Jones explaining their artistic process. In the first room is *Owed To Humana* – exhalations and voices overlap with the reading of names and refrains of *"I'm tired"* over soulful harmonies. Scenes of a Zoom call crossfade with celestial bodies, smoke, geometric shapes and topographical maps as a Borg-like voice deconstructs the Eurocentric meanings embedded in language.

Owed To Chiron is performed in an open space with a gigantic mirror ball suspended, refracting an orbit of calm, twinkling light. The sound is cosmic and meditative – synth pads and layers of voices, rippling threads of viola, theremin solos adding a sci-fi sense of possibility. A pitched down gender-neutral voice performs a monologue in turns sermonising and reflective, spinning truths from puns and double meanings, speaking of alternative ways of understanding ourselves and others. It feels a bit like taking an ideological hypno-bath, and as I wrestle with the odd sense of being manipulated, I draw back the curtain to find *Owed To Catherine*, the naked recording set-up for the sound work, including a theremin, vocal synthesizer, viola bow, keyboard and microphone stained with red lipstick. A glimpse of the wizard behind the curtain.

On the first floor is *Owed To Diaspora*, a 40 minute sound work that continues in the cosmic ambient vein of the work below, only without narration. The room is lit in blacklight, with projected images of smoke, fire, sound waves, celestial bodies, lightning, sweeping landscapes and rock formations, as voices repeatedly intone the word *"Stay"*.

Finally, I walk into the *Chironic Chapel*, a brightly lit space, looking like an alien set from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: a masonic chequerboard floor tile, three chrome spheres positioned in the centre. Decorated skylights look like glass stained with colourful patterns of marijuana leaf, vocal cords, mushrooms, human hearts. In this final space there is no sound, no guiding voice, no more excuses to be passive. By this point Jones's work has induced a powerful introspection. It's patient, compassionate, challenging work, and I feel grateful that this space has been created to allow me to sit with these thoughts.

Leah Kardos

Sonic Acts Biennial 2022
Various venues, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Stemming from the ambitious sonic research programme of the 2022 Sonic Acts Biennial is an exhibition and public programme taking place across three Amsterdam locations. One Sun After Another anchored this year's thematic in nuclear anxiety, temporal volatility and pollution, but the weekend's performance series Inner Ear(th) helped digest and navigate these weighty concepts.

The exhibition takes its name from Etel Adnan's epic poem *The Arab Apocalypse* (1989) with a nod to physicist J Robert Oppenheimer, who famously described the nuclear explosion as a thousand suns. It challenges conventional ties between time and history by including works that change, repurpose or utilise time units to create new sonic spaces and slow down what feels like a count towards our own inevitable demise.

Several works attempt to reconcile knowledge of deep geological time with strategies of subverting present day reality: at W139, the visitor is greeted by *Gauge* (2013–15), a video installation by Danny Osborne, Patrick Thompson, Alexa Hatanaka, Sarah McNair-Landry, Erik McNair-Landry and Erik Boomer, accompanied by a soundtrack composed by Raven Chacon. A standout, the video depicts a group of artists on a subarctic tidal flat in Nunavut, Canada. The group painted a heaving ice wall which rises and falls nearly ten metres overnight. The mesmerizing visual narrative is accompanied by Chacon's soundtrack, composed of hundreds of recordings made in the area.

In the main space, Louis Braddock Clarke and Zuzanna Zgierska's *Hard Drives From Space* (2022) is an installation depicting a research station aiming to demagnetise meteorites as a decolonising alchemical gesture in Haviggivik, Greenland. When meteorites burn through the Earth's atmosphere, they lose their magnetism. The group heat up the rocks, erasing the Earth's magnetic data. And stationed at the Het HEM and Zone2Source, Tomoko Sauvage's *Buloklok* is a grouping of underwater sculpture instruments in the form of glass bubbles that represent self-regulating time systems. The bubbles, distant relatives of bells, emitted a soft cacophony of sounds that speculate on alternative methods of timekeeping, lending much needed breath to the biennial.

The Massive Het HEM is a former military factory that until 2003 produced ammunition and firearms for the Dutch army. Anthea Caddy's *Long Throw* consists of two custom-built parabolic speakers projecting beams of sound up to three kilometres long, and hung metal plates once used to make bullets. In a video, factory workers are seen melting the massive plates.

Other works test the sonic capacity of the audience: Marshall Trammell's *Music Research Strategies* (2022) with Palestinian musician Dirar Kalash enacts a cultural weaponry intervention that references strategies by former Black Panther member Russell 'Maroon' Shoatz, while Samson Young's six hour sound performance *Nocturne* (2015) uses nontraditional Foley sounds to animate footage of night bombings which became a score for the durational work.

The weekend's programme is presided over by the strangely anthomorpic figure of the Acousmonium, a sound diffusion system designed in 1974 by Francois Bayle in France. It consists of 80 loudspeakers of differing sizes and shapes acting as an electronic orchestra – in its current formation it takes on the lion's share of the weekend's programming, embodying dead and living composers, from Iannis Xenakis to Jaap Vink.

On Friday evening, Felicia Atkinson's haunting *Neither Back Nor Front Than This Burning Rock* (for Georgia O'Keeffe, 2021) brings us back to New Mexico, the birthplace of the nuclear bomb. But by Saturday, while watching Hüma Utku's arrhythmic performance of her new album *The Psychologist* (2022), personal accounts of time and history seem both predictable and unexpected – as the rhythms slow down and speed up, ringing natural and unnatural, they merely parallel each other.

Xenia Benivolski

Jadon Cobb

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"I"

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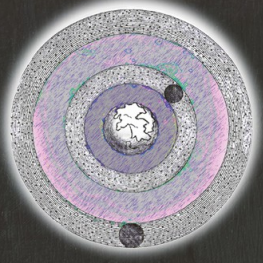

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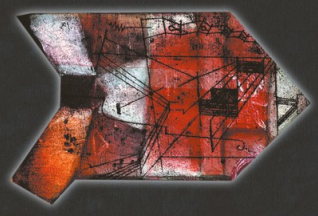

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EVICSHEN

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PART CHIMP
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NOV 20TH - MOTH CLUB
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LIZ LAMERE

NOV 21ST - CAFE OTO
RICHARD PINHAS
THE ENGINE ROOM

NOV 23RD - CAFE OTO
ZOMBIE ZOMBIE
IGGOR CAVALERA

NOV 25TH - SHACKLEWELL ARMS
THANK
THE EUROSUITE

NOV 28TH - CAFE OTO
JESSICA MOSS
THOMAS STONE

DEC 1ST - THE COURTYARD THEATRE
RACHAEL DADD
MAJA LENA

DEC 6TH - CORSICA STUDIOS
MC YALLAH & DEBMASTER

DEC 8TH - CORSICA STUDIOS
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DEC 9TH - CAFE OTO
BUNNY
YOSA PEIT
CHARLES BULLENT (DJ)

DEC 10TH - ST. JOHN ON BETHNAL GREEN
SHOVEL DANCE COLLECTIVE

DEC 12-14TH - CAFE OTO
VALENTINA MAGALETTI RESIDENCY

DEC 14TH - SHACKLEWELL ARMS
PADDYWAK (SINGLE LAUNCH)
EKSTASIS
WINNX

JAN 14TH - CAFE OTO (MATINEE & EVENING SHOW)
EX-EASTER ISLAND HEAD
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FEB 26TH - EARTH
THE ORB (AMBIENT SET)
CRAIG LEON
CASSELL WEBB

MAR 10TH - CAFE OTO
ŠIROM

MAR 11TH - ST. JOHN ON BETHNAL GREEN
GWENIFER RAYMOND

MAR 15TH - CAFE OTO
KATIE KIM

MAR 19TH - CAFE OTO
EL KHAT

MAR 28TH - SERVANT JAZZ QUARTERS
BRIGID MAE POWER

MAR 31ST- ST. JOHN ON BETHNAL GREEN
RICHARD SKELTON

APR 27TH & 28TH - CAFE OTO
SHIT & SHINE

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dice.fm DICE BABA YAGA'S HUT C/S

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12 DEC

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Better Corners
Marta Salogni
+ Valentina Magaletti
+ Cathy Lucas
12 DEC

13 DEC

MOIN
Alpha Maid
Fanny Chiarello
CZN
Valentina Magaletti
13 DEC

14 DEC

Leon Marks + Al Wootton
Laila Sakini
Holy Tongue
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Limpe Fuchs
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DJ Marcelle
Ka Baird
Das Kinn
Ya Tosiba
Alexandra Cardenas

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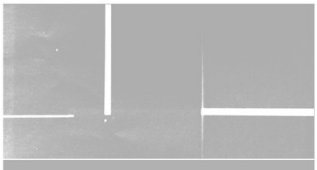

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Nov 21	Michael Tippett Centre Bath Spa
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Dec 2	Brunel Museum London

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GIOfest XV

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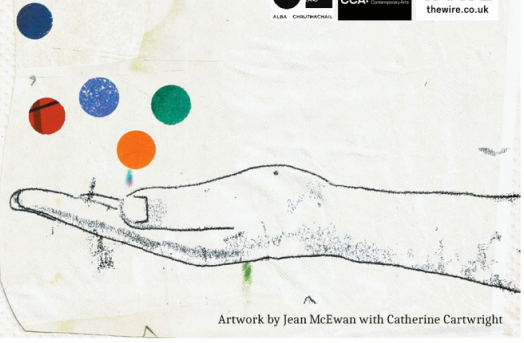
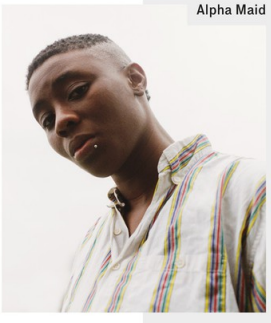


Artwork by Jean McEwan with Catherine Cartwright

Out There

Festivals, gigs, exhibitions and online events

NB events can be subject to cancellation or postponement. Please check with venues or festivals first. To keep up with the latest announcements and live streams from festivals, venues and musicians, follow @thewiremagazine on Twitter and sign up to *The Wire*'s weekly newsletter at thewire.co.uk/newsletters



Alpha Maid

Wire supported events

Cafe Oto UK
Events at the North East London venue for experimental music include: Naviar Records Haiku Fest with Manja Ristić and others (7 December), Bunny featuring Daniel O'Sullivan, Rose Keeler-Schaffeler and Thighpaulsandra (9), Valentina Magaletti residency with Alpha Maid, Laila Sakini , CZ, Holy Tongue and more (12–14), Music For Trumpets, Bass Clarinets & Saxophones by Giacinto Scelsi, Julie Kjaer, Thanos Chrysakis, Chris Cundy, Tim Hodgkinson, John Cage and Morton Feldman (17). London Cafe Oto, various times and prices, cafeoto.co.uk

GIOfest UK
The Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra's annual festival of improvised music, conductions, experimental scores, films and workshops. Guests include Maggie Nicols, Corey Mwamba, Australian Art Orchestra, Yasuko Kaneko, Yasuhiro Usui, Maria Sappho and Jessica Argo. Glasgow CCA, 30 November–3 December, £25–free, glasgowimprovisersorchestra.com

Iklectik UK
Events at the South London performance space include: Aja + Lukas Koenig + Bride (2 December), matinee: Rarescale & Scott L Miller (3, 2:30pm), Algorave (3), Immersive Audio Workshop (4), Heith + Teen + Sseq (8), Club Integral with Seaming, Hume/May/Hodgkinson and Robert Storey & Maya Yianni (9), The Listening Body (11, 3pm, 5pm & 7pm), Steve Beresford & Steve Noble Recording Session (13), Kuedo (14), Kuedo + Lonely Bindi (15). London Iklectik, various times and prices, iklectikartlab.com

Madeiradig Portugal
Week-long festival on a Portuguese island with four days of concerts featuring Phew, Raven Chacon, Bob Ostertag, Beatriz Ferreyra, Silvia Tarozzi & Deborah Walker, Richard Skelton, Alison Cotton, Sofie Birch, Gabriel Ferrandini and Pedro Pestana. Madeira various venues, 8–13 December, madeiradig.com

International festivals

Dais Records 15th Anniversary Party US
Los Angeles and New York based label marks a milestone with performances by ADULT., Drew McDowall, Helm, Hiro Kone, Space Afrika, Spice, Cold Gawd, Drab Majesty, SRSQ and more. Los Angeles Belasco, 10 December, 5:30pm, $55, concerts.livenation.com

Sacred Realism Germany
Three evenings of music from the Sacred Realism collective and related orbits featuring Catherine Lamb, Andrew Lafkas, Bryan Eubanks, Rebecca Lane, Xavier Lopez, Peter Ablinger, Clara de Asis and Oceans Roar 1000 Drums. Also includes performances of Morton Feldman's *Triadic Memories* and "receptions with sound" by Judith Hamann and Peter Cusack. Berlin KM28, 8–10 December, sacredrealism.org

Sonic Matter Switzerland
Zurich festival for experimental music partnering with Nyege Nyege in Uganda. Concerts, sound journeys, lounges, talks and exhibitions with Yao Bobby, Ale Hop, Jason Kahn, Rhodri Davies and Robin Hayward, plus music by Alvin Lucier and Éliane Radigue. Zurich various venues, 1–4 December, sonicmatter.ch

Underground Institute Festival Germany
The agency and platform for difficult to classify artists set up by Mary Ocher hosts a festival with performances by Limpe Fuchs, El Khat, DJ Marcelle, Ka Baird and others; talks by Martin Rev and Cedrik Fermont; a sound installation by KMRU; and DJ sets by Xiu Xiu and Zoë Mc Pherson. Plus workshops and a soundwalk. Berlin Silent Green, Panke and gr_und gallery, 8–10 December, underground-institute.com

We Jazz Finland
Helsinki based avant jazz label's annual festival presents Ahmed, Ka Baird, Carl Stone, Will Guthrie, Fire!, Alexander Hawkins, Alan Braufman, Pat Thomas, Patricia Brennan, Avishai Cohen Quartet, Uusi Aika and many more. Helsinki various venues, 27 November–4 December, wejazz.fi

Special events

Duke Ellington's Sacred Music US
Annual performance of the jazz composer's late-career *Sacred Music* for big band, vocal and instrumental soloists and tap dancers. This year's performance is by The Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra. Online & Seattle Town Hall, 30 December, 7:30pm, $50–$10, earshot.org

Evolving Soundscapes Italy
Music events series within the Turin MAO museum's *Buddha10* exhibition focusing on artists from the Asian continent and diaspora: Park Jiha (1 December), Rieko Whitfield + White Boy Scream films + panel (24 January), Chinabot: JPN Kasai + Neo Geodesia live + panel (25), Sainkho Namtchylak (15 February), Liew Niyomkarn (1 March), Ana Roxanne (21), Salamanda (6) and Phew (27). Turin MAO, until 27 April, maotorino.it

Issue Project Room US
New York's cross-arts commissioners present Sydney Spann & Kiera Mulhern in a performance using field recordings and voice. New York MITU580, 1 December, 8pm $10 donation–free, issueprojectroom.org

DJ Marcelle/Another Nice Mess World
The multi-turntable, mash-up DJ and this month's Epiphanies columnist plays various clubs and festivals in Europe and Japan this month: Paris Sacré (2 December), Brussels C11 – Epicerie Moderne (3), Berlin Underground Institute Festival (8), London MOT Unit (16), Barcelona Sala Apolo (17) and Tokyo Vent (31). anothernicemess.com

Reflux Germany
Berlin concert series mixing a range of electroacoustic music, from musique concrète to industrial and from mechanical installations to plunderphonics. The series wraps up with Jasmine Guffond, Mario Bertoncini and Lasse Marhaug (Uferstudios, 10 December), Sean Meehan, Rainer Riehn and Jerome Noetinger (Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek, 11) and Lawrence English, Roland Kayn and Diane Labrosse (Theater im Delphi, 13). Berlin various venues, times and prices, zangimusic.wordpress.com

Roulette US
Concerts at New York's long-running experimental music space include: Shelley Hirsch (8–9 December), Ned Rothenberg's Crossings Four with Mary Halvorson, Sylvie Courvoisier & Tomas Fujiwara (13), Nick Dunston's *Spider Season* album launch (14), *Transatlantic Trance Map* featuring a Faversham ensemble led by Evan Parker and a New York group led by Ned Rothenberg collaborating remotely in real time (17) and Phill Niblock: *6 Hours Of Music And Film* (21). New York Roulette, various times and prices, roulette.org

Nicole Ngai

Visitations Belgium
Cross-pollinations between local and international improvisors including Ghost Trance Septet Plays Anthony Braxton. Antwerp Rataplan, 9–10 December, soundinmotion.be

Online & hybrid events

Elastic Arts US/Online
Online stream and in-person performances at this Chicago venue include: Catalytic Sound Festival with Ballister, Damon Locks & Ben Hall and Ken Vandermark Quartet (2 December), Catalytic Sound Festival with Joe McPhee/Paal Nilssen-Love, Katinka Kleijn & Lia Kohl and Russ Johnson Quartet (3) and DKV Trio featuring Ken Vandermark, Kent Kessler and Hamid Drake (29). Online & Chicago Elastic Arts, 8pm CT, various prices, elasticarts.org

Exhibitions & installations

Laurie Anderson Belgium
Exhibition and performances by the musician and multidisciplinary artist, including her VR installation *To The Moon* created with Hsin-Chien Huang, screenings of *Heart Of A Dog* (28 November) and *Home Of The Brave* (30), and performances with The Brussels Philharmonic (1 December) and Rubin Kodheli (2). Brussels Bozar, until 8 January, bozar.be

City Of Kings: A History Of New York Graffiti US
Two-part exhibition tracing the emergence of graffiti as an art form in New York, highlighting under-recognised artists and players. New York Howl! Happening (19 November–15 January) & Howl! Arts/Howl! Archive (3 December–29 January), howlarts.org

The Horror Show! UK
50 years of provocation in British art including work by Marc Almond, Gazelle Twin, Liegh Bowery, A Guy Called Gerald, Derek Jarman, Barry Adamson, Haroon Mirza, Drew Mulholland, Tricky, Scanner, Anne Bean, Cyclobe, Tai Shani, Jake & Dinos Chapman, Noel Fielding, Don Letts, Linder, Jamie Reid, Steven Stapleton, Laura Grace Ford and Poly Styrene. London Somerset House, 27 October–19 February, £16.50–£12, somersethouse.org

Christian Marclay France
Exhibition by the turntablist and media artist taking in works in sound, film, photography and montage. Paris Le Centre Pompidou, 16 November–27 February, €17–€14, centrepompidou.fr

Chris Ruffoni: Amexperimental Attic UK
Sound sculptor and installation artist in residence opens his studio as he develops a new light sensitive analogue circuit which triggers acoustic sounds mechanically. Huddersfield Dai Hall, 5–11 December, check with venue for times, amespace.uk

Tirzah US
An exhibition of videos shot by UK musician and Curl collective member Tirzah's friends and collaborators to accompany her songs. New York Long Island City Sculpture Center, until 27 February, Thurs–Mon, sculpture-center.org

UK on stage

Balimaya Project
Rescheduled dates for the big band which mixes jazz with percussionist and ensemble leader Yahael Camara Onono's West African musical heritage: Falmouth Cornish Bank (1 December), Bristol Thekla (6), Leeds Brudenell Social Club (7), Manchester Band On The Wall (8), Newcastle upon Tyne Cobalt Studios (9) and Norwich Arts Centre (10). balimayaproject.com

Eric Chenaux
Mind-melting guitar manoeuvres from the Canadian singer-songwriter: Edinburgh Summerhall (2 December), Glasgow The Old Hairdresser's (3), Sheffield Bishops House (6) and London West Hampstead Arts Club (9). dice.fm

Cobalt Studios
Newcastle DIY space's music events include: Brothers Gillespie (2 December), Afriquoi (3), Balimaya Project (9) and Vipertime (15). Newcastle Cobalt Studios, various times and prices, cobaltstudios.co.uk

Curious Ear
Improvised music in Manchester with Phil Durrant & Gaudenz Badrutt + Richard Harrison & David Birchall. Manchester St Margaret's Church, 9 December, 7:30pm, £10–£8, curiousear.net

Fizzle
Birmingham concerts of improvised music and avant jazz: Ruth Goller's Let Spin (MAC, 2 December), Binker Golding/John Edwards/Steve Noble (RBC, 8), Will Glaser/Alex Bonney/Matthew Herd (Centrala, 11). Birmingham various venues, times and prices, fizzlebirmingham.com

Jesca Hoop
Manchester based American singer-songwriter supporting new album *Order Of Romance* produced by John Parish: Edinburgh Caves (24 November), Gateshead The Sage (25), Sheffield Upper Chapel (26), Chester St Mary's (27), Galway Róisín Dubh (1 December), Limerick Kasbah Social Club (2), Dublin Workmans Cellar (3), Leeds Howard Assembly Room (4), Nottingham Glee Club (6), Bexhill-On-Sea De La Warr Pavilion (7), Cambridge Storey's Field Centre (8), London EartH (9) and Manchester Hallé St Peter (17). jescahoop.com

Let Spin

Hundred Years Gallery
Concerts of improvised and other music at this intimate London gallery include: LUME with Matt Fisher & Dee Byrne + Olie Brice String Project + Bill Thompson & Cath Roberts (9 December). London Hundred Years Gallery, 7:30pm unless stated otherwise, prices vary, hundredyearsgallery.co.uk

Let Spin
Post-jazz outfit featuring Chris Williams on alto sax, Moss Freed on guitars, Ruth Goller on bass and Finlay Panter on drums: Cardiff Flute And Tankard (30 November), Nottingham Metronome (1 December), Birmingham MAC (2), Lancaster Gregson Community & Arts Centre (3), Newcastle upon Tyne Bobik's (4), Manchester The Yard (5) and London Vortex (8). letspinband.com

Kali Malone: *Does Spring Hide Its Joy*
Composer and musician Malone's new durational composition with guitarist Stephen O'Malley, cellist Lucy Railton and video artist Nika Milano. London Purcell Room, 2–3 December, 8pm, £20, southbankcentre.co.uk

Microcorps + A'Bear + Floors
East London night headlined by Alexander Tucker's Microcorps project for electronics, cello and voice. London Walthamstow Trades Hall (upstairs), 8 December, 7pm, £10.30, ra.co

Mopomoso Christmas Special
Monthly improvised music matinee's festive annual with short sets by a wide variety of players. Please note later start time. London Vortex, 18 December, 5pm, £12–£8, vortexjazz.co.uk

Quatuor Bozzini
Three different programmes of work in one day by Montreal's adventurous string quartet including pieces by Tanya Tagaq, Cassandra Miller, Gerald Barry, Linda Catlin Smith and Claude Vivier. London Wigmore Hall, 3 December, 11:30am, 3pm & 7pm, £16–£14/concert, wigmore-hall.org.uk

MC Yallah & Debmaster
Uganda based Kenyan rapper Yallah returns with her Berlin producer Debmaster. The Birmingham date is Supersonic's Xmas Party with support from Blue Ruth: London Corsica Studios (6 December) and Birmingham Hare & Hounds (8). supersonicfestival.com

Incoming

Big Ears US
200 performances over four days in downtown Knoxville. With Grouper, Arooj Aftab, Bill Frisell, Tyshawn Sorey, Marc Ribot, 700 Bliss, Carl Stone, Makaya McCraven, Mary Halvorson, Éliane Radigue, Annea Lockwood, Catherine Lamb, Steve Reich, Terry Allen, Bill Orcutt Guitar Quartet, James 'Blood' Ulmer, eight John Zorn projects to mark his 70th birthday, William Parker, Steve Gunn, Lonnie Holley, Kali Malone and more. TN Knoxville various venues, 30 March–2 April, $850–$125, bigearsfestival.org

Rewire The Netherlands
International festival of adventurous music in The Hague. Programme to be announced. The Hague various venues, 6–9 April, early bird passes €85, rewirefestival.nl

Sons d'hiver France
Three weeks of creative music and avant jazz in the suburbs of Paris. Programme to be announced. Paris various venues, 27 January–18 February, sonsdhiver.org

Send listings two months in advance to listings@thewire.co.uk

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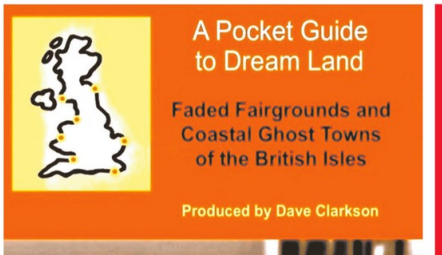

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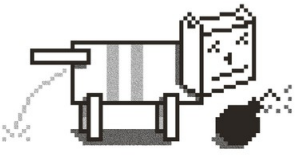

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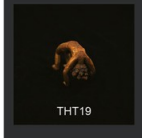

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THT16 / SP126. **Alex Zethson** – Residy CD/DL SUPERPANG CO-RELEASE

THT17. **Maya Bennardo, Erik Blennow Calälv, Kristofer Svensson** – Two Skies (CD/DL)

THT18. **Susana Santos Silva** – All The Birds And A Telephone Ringing (LP/CD/DL)

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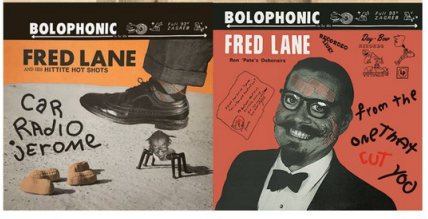

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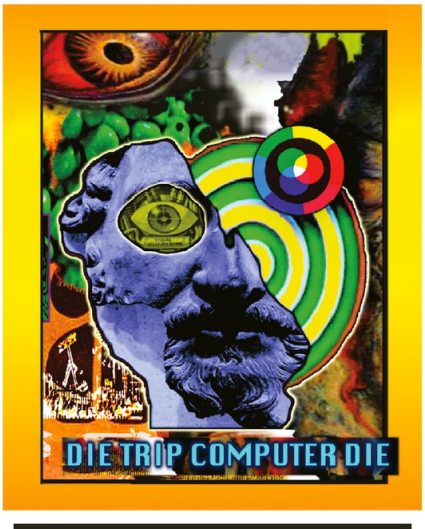

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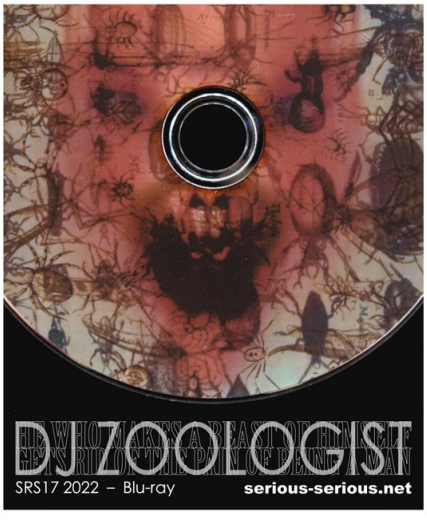

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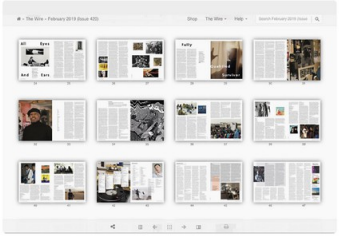

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Epiphanies

The uncompromising visions of art brut and outsider art empower **DJ Marcelle/Another Nice Mess** to go her own way on the turntables

DJ Marcelle/Another Nice Mess with Johann Hauser's *Girl In Yellow Dress 2* (1967)

Recently I got a mail from De School, the reopened Amsterdam night club, in which they asked if I was willing to give DJ workshops. They wanted me to give lectures about how to sync tracks, how to build up a set, and all these other cliches. I was both surprised and shocked by this request, and thought to myself: what have I done wrong? Over the years, I never hid my opinion that DJ workshops, rock academies and 'how to boost your music career by seeing yourself as a brand' courses are the antithesis of what I stand for – they discourage creativity and authenticity, create clones and fakeness, and put the DJ in a straitjacket.

On the other hand, maybe I should just accept the offer and, instead of talking about all kinds of stale rules, take the students to an outsider art museum. Because it's at one of these museums, Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, that I found true inspiration for my own music and DJing. Art brut (raw art) was a description given in 1947 by French painter and sculptor Jean Dubuffet to art made by outsiders, including psychiatric patients. Such artists are untrained and have no contact with the standard art world. It is art produced compulsively, for individual satisfaction and expression, and with no implicit wish for it to be sold, exhibited or ever seen by others.

Obviously, one can argue that dubbing something or someone as an outsider is saying more about the people who make this claim than about the subject itself. The norms and values of the ones with power decide what is in or out, and what definitions we use.

However, for me it's refreshing to see how artists remain their own authentic, visionary self. Take Dutch artist Jefke Dijkstra. Her drawings of high rise buildings are a riot of colour, rhythm and movement. Japanese artist Shuji Takashi works more or less unaware of the size limitations of the paper, so often his compositions come to an abrupt end.

In art brut I see anxiety and obsessions, but also humour, lightness, an expression of how the world really is or should be. On our walls in our Amsterdam house I have many postcard examples of this: a moving drawing by Frédéric Bruly Bouabré of two vulnerable standing figures, their arms entangled with each other. The full title: *Les Hommes S'aiment, Mais Parfois Il Arrive Des Cas De Folie Où Ils Se Font La Guerre. Mais Ici L'amour Domine.* Another drawing is of a doubled face with four ears, two mouths and four eyes. It's funny and disturbing at the same time. Next to it hangs a drawing of a woman's head with a big hairdo containing a woman with a big hairdo. I can look at them endlessly.

In terms of music, one of my favourite artists is Bryn Jones, aka Muslimgauze, who died in 1999 at the age of just 37. He surely had some of the traits of an outsider artist: he had an almost innocent, open and unlearned perspective on how to make music. He was an artist totally unto himself, his style was unique. Beats would come out and in during tracks at unexpected moments. Jones lived in his own world, not caring what anyone thought of him. He made up to six albums a month, not bothered if they would all be released, and his interest in the Israel/Palestine situation bordered on the obsessive. As with the most valuable artists, for instance Mark E Smith, there was some provocation and unpleasantness involved – in Muslimgauze's case, some of his track and album titles, all taken from news and facts about the occupation – but good art should not be taken literally, it should get one thinking.

Art brut did not have a culture of art schools or try to fit the system, and I can relate to that: I have always refused to ask for financial or other help from institutions, and I will never explain myself to or be at the mercy of someone sitting behind a desk. A few years ago someone working for Dutch television wanted to produce a mini documentary about me as part of an overview of that year's edition of the famous Amsterdam Dance Event. He took it for granted I was booked for ADE, even though I told him I wasn't. In the end, I ended up in a documentary about a festival I didn't participate in. I loved that! It was very Marcelle-like.

Did this make me an outsider or insider? Perhaps both. A remark I regularly get after my sets is people saying that they never thought club music could be this strange, but also far more exciting – starting a set with someone shouting for help for several minutes, playing weird techno, a cappella singing and music concrète all at the same time, and drastically changing musical styles at any given moment, so the audience can never rest on their laurels. They never realised how bored they had become with conventional club nights and probably had a similar epiphanic feeling as me when I first saw a whole collection of outsider art.

After my visit in Lausanne, I subscribed to the magazine *Raw Vision*, and during future DJ travels I visited outsider art museums in, for example, New York and Paris. I bought, as well as numerous posters, postcards and books, outsider art music by artists like Adolf Wölfli, Jean-Marie Massou and Hans Krüsi. But most of all, I stayed true to my own musical identity, and my belief of how my work should be: open, free and ungraspable, existing in a world of its own. ☐ DJ Marcelle/Another Nice Mess tours locations across Europe this month: see Out There. *DJ Marcelle: The Musical* is released by Play Loud! Productions anothernicemess.com

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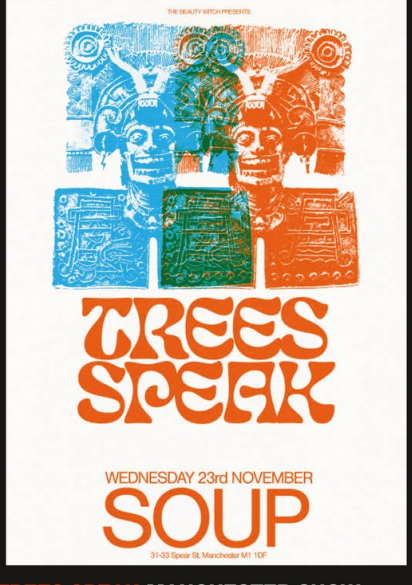

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